DEMOS

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IMMENSE SUCCESS.

SWEET VOWS WALTZ,

BY

OTTO ROEDER.

Composer of the celebrated

LOVE'S DREAMLAND & GONDOLIER WALTZES.

Played by all ORCHESTRAS.

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DEMOS

VOL. I.

DEMOS

A STORY OF ENGLISH SOCIALISM

Jene machen Partei; welch' unerlaubtes Beginnen!
Aber unsre Partei, freilich, versteht sich von selbst'
GOETHE

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. I.

LONDON
SMITH, ELDER, & CO., 15 WATERLOO PLACE
1886

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DEMOS.

CHAPTER I.

Stanbury Hill, remote but two hours' walk from a region blasted with mine and factory and furnace, shelters with its western slope a fair green valley, a land of meadows and orchard, untouched by poisonous breath. At its foot lies the village of Wanley. The opposite side of the hollow is clad with native wood, skirting for more than a mile the bank of a shallow stream, a tributary of the Severn. Wanley consists in the main of one long street; the houses are stone-built, with mullioned windows, here and there showing a picturesque gable or a quaint old chimney. The oldest buildings are four cottages which stand at the end of the street; once upon a time they formed the country residence of the abbots of Belwick. The abbey of that name still claims for its ruined self a portion of earth's surface; but, as

it had the misfortune to be erected above the thickest coal-seam in England, its walls are blackened with the fume of collieries and shaken by the strain of mighty engines. Climb Stanbury Hill at nightfall, and, looking eastward, you behold far off a dusky ruddiness in the sky, like the last of an angry sunset; with a glass you can catch glimpses of little tongues of flame, leaping and quivering on the horizon. That is Belwick. The good abbots, who were wont to come out in the summer time to Wanley, would be at a loss to recognise their consecrated home in those sooty relics. Belwick, with its hundred and fifty fire-vomiting blast-furnaces, would to their eyes more nearly resemble a certain igneous realm of which they thought much in their sojourn upon earth, and which, we may assure ourselves, they dream not of in the quietness of their last long sleep.

A large house, which stands aloof from the village and a little above it, is Wanley Manor. The county history tells us that Wanley was given in the fifteenth century to that same religious foundation, and that at the dissolution of monasteries the Manor passed into the hands of Queen Catherine. The house is half-timbered; from the height above it looks old and peaceful amid its immemorial trees. Towards the end of the eighteenth century it became the home of a family named Eldon, the estate

including the greater part of the valley below. But an Eldon who came into possession when William IV. was King brought the fortunes of his house to a low ebb, and his son, seeking to improve matters by abandoning his prejudices and entering upon commercial speculation, in the end left a widow and two boys with little more to live upon than the income which arose from Mrs. Eldon's settlements. The manor was shortly after this purchased by a Mr. Mutimer, a Belwick ironmaster; but Mrs. Eldon and her boys still inhabited the house, in consequence of certain events which will shortly be narrated. Wanley would have mourned their departure; they were the aristocracy of the neighbourhood, and to have them ousted by a name which no one knew, a name connected only with blast-furnaces, would have made a distinct fall in the tone of Wanley society. Fortunately no changes were made in the structure by its new owner. Not far from it you see the church and the vicarage, these also unmolested in their quiet age. Wanley, it is to be feared, lags far behind the times—painfully so, when one knows for a certainty that the valley upon which it looks conceals treasures of coal, of ironstone—blackband, to be technical—and of fireclay. Some ten years ago it seemed as if better things were in store; there was a chance that the vale might for ever cast

off its foolish greenery, and begin vomiting smoke and flames in humble imitation of its metropolis beyond the hills. There are men in Belwick who have an angry feeling whenever Wanley is mentioned to them.

After the inhabitants of the Manor, the most respected of those who dwelt in Wanley were the Walthams. At the time of which I speak, this family consisted of a middle-aged lady; her son, of one-and-twenty; and her daughter, just eighteen. They had resided here for little more than two years, but a gentility which marked their speech and demeanour, and the fact that they were well acquainted with the Eldons, from the first caused them to be looked up to. It was conjectured, and soon confirmed by Mrs. Waltham's own admissions, that they had known a larger way of living than that to which they adapted themselves in the little house on the side of Stanbury Hill, whence they looked over the village street. Mr. Waltham had, in fact, been a junior partner in a Belwick firm, which came to grief. He saved enough out of the wreck to make a modest competency for his family, and would doubtless in time have retrieved his fortune, but death was beforehand with him. His wife, in the second year of her widowhood, came with her daughter Adela to Wanley; her son Alfred had gone to commercial work in Belwick. Mrs. Waltham was

a prudent woman, and tenacious of ideas which recommended themselves to her practical instincts; such an idea had much to do with her settlement in the remote village, which she would not have chosen for her abode out of love of its old-world quietness. But at the Manor was Hubert Eldon. Hubert was four years older than Adela. He had no fortune of his own, but it was tolerably certain that some day he would be enormously rich, and there was small likelihood that he would marry till that expected change in his position came about.

On the afternoon of a certain Good Friday, Mrs. Waltham sat at her open window, enjoying the air and busy with many thoughts, among other things wondering who was likely to drop in for a cup of tea. It was a late Easter, and warm spring weather had already clothed the valley with greenness; to-day the sun was almost hot, and the west wind brought many a sweet odour from gardens near and far. From her sitting-room Mrs. Waltham had the best view to be obtained from any house in Wanley; she looked, as I have said, right over the village street, and on either hand the valley spread before her a charming prospect. Opposite was the wooded slope, freshening now with exquisite shades of new-born leafage; looking north, she saw fruit-gardens,

making tender harmonies; southwards spread verdure and tillage. Yet something there was which disturbed the otherwise perfect unity of the scene, an unaccustomed trouble to the eye. In the very midst of the vale, perhaps a quarter of a mile to the south of the village, one saw what looked like the beginning of some engineering enterprise—a great throwing-up of earth, and the commencement of a roadway on which metal rails were laid. What was being done? The work seemed too extensive for a mere scheme of drainage. Whatever the undertaking might be, it was now at a stand-still, seeing that old Mr. Mutimer, the owner of the land, had been in his grave just three days, and no one as yet could say whether his heir would or would not pursue this novel project. Mrs. Waltham herself felt that the view was spoilt, though her appreciation of nature was not of the keenest, and she would never have thought of objecting to a scheme which would produce money at the cost of the merely beautiful.

'I scarcely think Hubert will continue it,' she was musing to herself. 'He has enough without that, and his tastes don't lie in that direction.'

She had on her lap a local paper, at which she glanced every now and then; but her state of mind was evidently restless. The road on either side of which stood the houses of the

village led on to the Manor, and in that direction Mrs. Waltham gazed frequently. The church clock chimed half-past four, and shortly after a rosy-cheeked young girl came at a quick step up the gravelled pathway which made the approach to the Walthams' cottage. She saw Mrs. Waltham at the window, and, when she was near, spoke.

'Is Adela at home?'

'No, Letty; she's gone for a walk with her brother.'

'I'm so sorry!' said the girl, whose voice was as sweet as her face was pretty. 'We wanted her to come for croquet. Yet I was half afraid to come and ask her whilst Mr. Alfred was at home.'

She laughed, and at the same time blushed a little.

'Why should you be afraid of Alfred?' asked Mrs. Waltham graciously.

'Oh, I don't know.'

She turned it off, and spoke quickly of another subject.

'How did you like Mr. Wyvern this morning?'

It was a new vicar, who had been in Wanley but a couple of days, and had this morning officiated for the first time at the church.

'What a voice he has!' was the lady's reply.

'Hasn't he? And such a hairy man! They say he's very learned; but his sermon was very simple—didn't you think so?'

'Yes, I liked it. Only he pronounces certain words strangely.'

'Oh, has Mr. Eldon come yet?' was the young lady's next question.

'He hadn't arrived this morning. Isn't it extraordinary? He must be out of England.'

'But surely Mrs. Eldon knows his address, and he can't be so very far away.'

As she spoke she looked down the pathway by which she had come, and of a sudden her face exhibited alarm.

'Oh, Mrs. Waltham!' she whispered hurriedly. 'If Mr. Wyvern isn't coming to see you! I'm afraid to meet him. Do let me pop in and hide till I can get away without being seen.'

The front door stood ajar, and the girl at once ran into the house. Mrs. Waltham came into the passage laughing.

'May I go to the top of the stairs?' asked the other nervously. 'You know how absurdly shy I am. No, I'll run out into the garden behind; then I can steal round as soon as he comes in.'

She escaped, and in a minute or two the new vicar presented himself at the door. A little maid might well have some apprehension

in facing him, for Mr. Wyvern was of vast proportions and leonine in aspect. With the exception of one ungloved hand and the scant portions of his face which were not hidden by hair, he was wholly black in hue; an enormous beard, the colour of jet, concealed the linen about his throat, and a veritable mane, dark as night, fell upon his shoulders. His features were not ill-matched with this sable garniture; their expression was a fixed severity: his eye regarded you with stern scrutiny, and passed from the examination to a melancholy reflectiveness. Yet his appearance was suggestive of anything but ill-nature; contradictory though it may seem, the face was a pleasant one, inviting to confidence, to respect; if he could only have smiled, the tender humanity which lurked in the lines of his countenance would have become evident. His age was probably a little short of fifty.

A servant replied to his knock, and, after falling back in a momentary alarm, introduced him to the sitting-room. He took Mrs. Waltham's hand silently, fixed upon her the full orbs of his dark eyes, and then, whilst still retaining her fingers, looked thoughtfully about the room. It was a pleasant little parlour, with many an evidence of refinement in those who occupied it. Mr. Wyvern showed something like a look of satisfaction. He seated

himself, and the chair creaked ominously beneath him. Then he again scrutinised Mrs. Waltham.

She was a lady of fair complexion, with a double chin. Her dress suggested elegant tastes, and her hand was as smooth and delicate as a lady's should be. A long gold chain descended from her neck to the watch-pocket at her waist, and her fingers exhibited several rings. She bore the reverend gentleman's scrutiny with modest grace, almost as if it flattered her. And indeed there was nothing whatever of ill-breeding in Mr. Wyvern's mode of instituting acquaintance with his parishioner; one felt that he was a man of pronounced originality, and that he might be trusted in his variance from the wonted modes.

The view from the windows gave him a subject for his first remarks. Mrs. Waltham had been in some fear of a question which would go to the roots of her soul's history; it would have been in keeping with his visage. But, with native acuteness, she soon discovered that Mr. Wyvern's gaze had very little to do with the immediate subject of his thought, or, what was much the same thing, that he seldom gave the whole of his attention to the matter outwardly calling for it. He was a man of profound mental absences; he could make replies, even put queries, and all the while be

brooding intensely upon a wholly different subject. Mrs. Waltham did not altogether relish it; she was in the habit of being heard with deference; but, to be sure, a clergyman only talked of worldly things by way of concession. It certainly seemed so in this clergyman's case.

'Your prospect,' Mr. Wyvern remarked presently, 'will not be improved by the works below.'

His voice was very deep, and all his words were weighed in the utterance. This deliberation at times led to peculiarities of emphasis in single words. Probably he was a man of philological crotchets; he said, for instance, 'pro-spect.'

'I scarcely think Mr. Eldon will go on with the mining,' replied Mrs. Waltham.

'Ah! you think not?'

'I am quite sure he said that unconsciously,' the lady remarked to herself. 'He's thinking of some quite different affair.'

'Mr. Eldon,' the clergyman resumed, fixing upon her an absent eye, 'is Mr. Mutimer's son-in-law, I understand?'

'His brother, Mr. Godfrey Eldon, was,' Mrs. Waltham corrected.

'Ah! the one that died?'

He said it questioningly; then added—

'I have a difficulty in mastering details of

this kind. You would do me a great kindness in explaining to me briefly of whom the family at the Manor at present consists?'

Mrs. Waltham was delighted to talk on such a subject.

'Only of Mrs. Eldon and her son, Mr. Hubert Eldon. The elder son, Godfrey, was lost in a shipwreck, on a voyage to New Zealand.'

'He was a sailor?'

'Oh, no!' said the lady, with a smile. 'He was in business at Belwick. It was shortly after his marriage with Miss Mutimer that he took the voyage—partly for his health, partly to examine some property his father had had an interest in. Old Mr. Eldon engaged in speculations—I believe it was flax-growing. The results, unfortunately, were anything but satisfactory. It was that which led to his son entering business—quite a new thing in their family. Wasn't it very sad? Poor Godfrey and his young wife both drowned! The marriage was, as you may imagine, not altogether a welcome one to Mrs. Eldon; Mr. Mutimer was quite a self-made man, quite. I understand he has relations in London of the very poorest class—labouring people.'

'They probably benefit by his will?'

'I can't say. In any case, to a very small extent. It has for a long time been understood that Hubert Eldon inherits.'

'Singular?' murmured the clergyman, still in the same absent way.

'Is it not! He took so to the young fellows; no doubt he was flattered to be allied to them. And then he was passionately devoted to his daughter; if only for her sake, he would have done his utmost for the family.'

'I understand that Mr. Mutimer purchased the Manor from them?'

'That was before the marriage. Godfrey Eldon sold it; he had his father's taste for speculation, I fancy, and wanted capital. Then Mr. Mutimer begged them to remain in the house. He certainly was a wonderfully kind old—old gentleman; his behaviour to Mrs. Eldon was always the perfection of courtesy. A stranger would find it difficult to understand how she could get on so well with him, but their sorrows brought them together, and Mr. Mutimer's generosity was really noble. If I had not known his origin, I should certainly have taken him for a county gentleman.'

'Yet he proposed to mine in the valley,' observed Mr. Wyvern, half to himself, casting a glance at the windows.

Mrs. Waltham did not at first see the connection between this and what she had been saying. Then it occurred to her that Mr. Wyvern was aristocratic in his views.

'To be sure,' she said, 'one expects to find a little of the original—of the money-making spirit. Of course such a thing would never have suggested itself to the Eldons. And in fact very little of the lands remained to them. Mr. Mutimer bought a great deal from other people.'

As Mr. Wyvern sat brooding, Mrs. Waltham asked—

'You have seen Mrs. Eldon?'

'Not yet. She is too unwell to receive visits.'

'Yes, poor thing, she is a great invalid. I thought, perhaps, you—— But I know she likes to be very quiet. What a strange thing about Mr. Eldon, is it not? You know that he has never come yet; not even to the funeral.'

'Singular!'

'An inexplicable thing! There has never been a shadow of disagreement between them.'

'Mr. Eldon is abroad, I believe?' said the clergyman musingly.'

'Abroad? Oh dear, no! At least, I——. Is there news of his being abroad?'

Mr. Wyvern merely shook his head.

'As far as we know,' Mrs. Waltham continued, rather disturbed by the suggestion, 'he is at Oxford.'

'A student?'

'Yes. He is quite a youth—only two-and-twenty.'

There was a knock at the door, and a maid-servant entered to ask if she should lay the table for tea. Mrs. Waltham assented; then, to her visitor—

'You will do us the pleasure of drinking a cup of tea, Mr. Wyvern? we make a meal of it, in the country way. My boy and girl are sure to be in directly.'

'I should like to make their acquaintance,' was the grave response.

'Alfred, my son,' the lady proceeded, 'is with us for his Easter holiday. Belwick is so short a distance away, and yet too far to allow of his living here, unfortunately.'

'His age?'

'Just one-and-twenty.'

'The same age as my own boy.'

'Oh, you have a son?'

'A youngster, studying music in Germany. I have just been spending a fortnight with him.'

'How delightful! If only poor Alfred could have pursued some more—more liberal occupation! Unhappily, we had small choice. Friends were good enough to offer him exceptional advantages not long after his father's death, and I was only too glad to accept the

opening. I believe he is a clever boy; only such a dreadful Radical.' She laughed, with a deprecatory motion of the hands. 'Poor Adela and he are at daggers drawn; no doubt it is some terrible argument that detains them now on the road. I can't think how he got his views; certainly his father never inculcated them.'

'The air, Mrs. Waltham, the air,' murmured the clergyman.

The lady was not quite sure that she understood the remark, but the necessity of reply was obviated by the entrance of the young man in question. Alfred was somewhat undergrown, but of solid build. He walked in a sturdy and rather aggressive way, and his plump face seemed to indicate an intelligence, bright, indeed, but of the less refined order. His head was held stiffly, and his whole bearing betrayed a desire to make the most of his defective stature. His shake of the hand was an abrupt downward jerk, like a pull at a bell-rope. In the smile with which he met Mr. Wyvern a supercilious frame of mind was not altogether concealed; he seemed anxious to have it understood that in *him* the clerical attire inspired nothing whatever of superstitious reverence. Reverence, in truth, was not Mr. Waltham's failing.

Mr. Wyvern, as his habit was at introduc-

tions, spoke no words, but held the youth's hand for a few moments and looked him in the eyes. Alfred turned his head aside uneasily, and was a trifle ruddy in the cheeks when at length he regained his liberty.

'By-the-by,' he remarked to his mother when he had seated himself, with crossed legs, 'Eldon has turned up at last. He passed us in a cab, or so Adela said. I didn't catch a glimpse of the individual.'

'Really!' exclaimed Mrs. Waltham. 'He was coming from Agworth station?'

'I suppose so. There was a trunk on the four-wheeler. Adela says he looked ill, though I don't see how she discovered so much.'

'I have no doubt she is right. He must have been ill.'

Mr. Wyvern, in contrast with his habit, was paying marked attention; he leaned forward, with a hand on each knee. In the meanwhile the preparations for tea had progressed, and as Mrs. Waltham rose at the sight of the teapot being brought in, her daughter entered the room. Adela was taller by half a head than her brother; she was slim and graceful. The air had made her face bloom, and the smile which was added as she drew near to the vicar enhanced the charm of a countenance at all times charming. She was not less than ladylike in self-possession, but Mr.

Wyvern's towering sableness clearly awed her a little. For an instant her eyes drooped, but at once she raised them and met the severe gaze with unflinching orbs. Releasing her hand, Mr. Wyvern performed a singular little ceremony: he laid his right palm very gently on her nutbrown hair, and his lips moved. At the same time he all but smiled.

Alfred's face was a delightful study the while; it said so clearly, 'Confound the parson's impudence!' Mrs. Waltham, on the other hand, looked pleased as she rustled to her place at the tea-tray.

'So Mr. Eldon has come?' she said, glancing at Adela. 'Alfred says he looks ill.'

'Mother,' interposed the young man, 'pray be accurate. I distinctly stated that I did not even see him, and should not have known that it was he at all. Adela is responsible for that assertion.'

'I just saw his face,' the girl said naturally. 'I thought he looked ill.'

Mr. Wyvern addressed to her a question about her walk, and for a few minutes they conversed together. There was a fresh simplicity in Adela's way of speaking which harmonised well with her appearance and with the scene in which she moved. A gentle English girl, this dainty home, set in so fair and peaceful a corner of the world, was just the abode one

would have chosen for her. Her beauty seemed a part of the burgeoning springtime. She was not lavish of her smiles; a timid seriousness marked her manner to the clergyman, and she replied to his deliberately-posed questions with a gravity respectful alike of herself and of him.

In front of Mr. Wyvern stood a large cake, of which a portion was already sliced. The vicar, at Adela's invitation, accepted a piece of the cake; having eaten this, he accepted another; then yet another. His absence had come back upon him, and as he talked he continued to eat portions of the cake, till but a small fraction of the original structure remained on the dish. Alfred, keenly observant of what was going on, pursed his lips from time to time and looked at his mother with exaggerated gravity, leading her eyes to the vanishing cake. Even Adela could not but remark the reverend gentleman's abnormal appetite, but she steadily discouraged her brother's attempts to draw her into the joke. At length it came to pass that Mr. Wyvern himself, stretching his hand mechanically to the dish, became aware that he had exhibited his appreciation of the sweet food in a degree not altogether sanctioned by usage. He fixed his eyes on the tablecloth, and was silent for a while.

As soon as the vicar had taken his depar-

ture Alfred threw himself into a chair, thrust out his legs, and exploded in laughter.

'By Jove!' he shouted. 'If that man doesn't experience symptoms of disorder! Why, I should be prostrate for a week if I consumed a quarter of what he has put out of sight.'

'Alfred, you are shockingly rude,' reproved his mother, though herself laughing. 'Mr. Wyvern is absorbed in thought.'

'Well, he has taken the best means, I should say, to remind himself of actualities,' rejoined the youth. 'But what a man he is! How did he behave in church this morning?'

'You should have come to see,' said Mrs. Waltham, mildly censuring her son's disregard of the means of grace.

'I like Mr. Wyvern,' observed Adela, who was standing at the window looking out upon the dusking valley.

'Oh, you would like any man in parsonical livery,' scoffed her brother.

Alfred shortly betook himself to the garden, where, in spite of a decided freshness in the atmosphere, he walked for half-an-hour smoking a pipe. When he entered the house again, he met Adela at the foot of the stairs.

'Mrs. Mewling has just come in,' she whispered.

'All right, I'll come up with you,' was the

reply. Heaven defend me from her small-talk!'

They ascended to a very little room, which made a kind of boudoir for Adela. Alfred struck a match and lit a lamp, disclosing a nest of wonderful purity and neatness. On the table a drawing-board was slanted; it showed a text of Scripture in process of 'illumination.'

'Still at that kind of thing!' exclaimed Alfred. 'My good child, if you want to paint, why don't you paint in earnest? Really, Adela, I must enter a protest! Remember that you are eighteen years of age.'

'I don't forget it, Alfred.'

'At eight-and-twenty, at eight-and-thirty, you propose still to be at the same stage of development?'

'I don't think we'll talk of it,' said the girl quietly. 'We don't understand each other.'

'Of course not, but we might, if only you'd read sensible books that I could give you.'

Adela shook her head. The philosophical youth sank into his favourite attitude—legs extended, hands in pockets, nose in air.

'So, I suppose,' he said presently, 'that fellow really has been ill?'

Adela was sitting in thought; she looked up with a shadow of annoyance on her face.

'That fellow?'

'Eldon, you know.'

'I want to ask you a question,' said his sister, interlocking her fingers and pressing them against her throat. 'Why do you always speak in a contemptuous way of Mr. Eldon?'

'You know I don't like the individual.'

'What cause has "the individual" given you?'

'He's a snob.'

'I'm not sure that I know what that means,' replied Adela, after thinking for a moment with downcast eyes.

'Because you never read anything. He's a fellow who raises a great edifice of pretence on rotten foundations.'

'What can you mean? Mr. Eldon is a gentleman. What pretence is he guilty of?'

'Gentleman!' uttered her brother with much scorn. 'Upon my word, that *is* the vulgarest of denominations! Who doesn't call himself so nowadays! A man's a man, I take it, and what need is there to lengthen the name? Thank the powers, we don't live in feudal ages. Besides, he doesn't seem to me to be what you imply.'

Adela had taken a book; in turning over the pages, she said—

'No doubt you mean, Alfred, that, for some reason, you are determined to view him with prejudice.'

'The reason is obvious enough. The fellow's

behaviour is detestable; he looks at you from head to foot as if you were applying for a place in his stable. Whenever I want an example of a contemptible aristocrat, there's Eldon ready-made. Contemptible, because he's such a sham; as if everybody didn't know his history and his circumstances!'

'Everybody doesn't regard them as you do. There is nothing whatever dishonourable in his position.'

'Not in sponging on a rich old plebeian, a man he despises, and living in idleness at his expense?'

'I don't believe Mr. Eldon does anything of the kind. Since his brother's death he has had a sufficient income of his own, so mother says.'

'Sufficient income of his own! Bah! Five or six hundred a year; likely he lives on that! Besides, haven't they soaped old Mutimer into leaving them all his property? The whole affair is the best illustration one could possibly have of what aristocrats are brought to in a democratic age. First of all, Godfrey Eldon marries Mutimer's daughter; you are at liberty to believe, if you like, that he would have married her just the same if she hadn't had a penny. The old fellow is flattered. They see the hold they have, and stick to him like leeches. All for want of money, of course. Our aristocrats begin to see that they can't get on without

money nowadays; they can't live on family records, and they find that people won't toady to them in the old way just on account of their name. Why, it began with Eldon's father—didn't he put his pride in his pocket, and try to make cash by speculation? Now I can respect *him*: he at all events faced the facts of the case honestly. The despicable thing in this Hubert Eldon is that, having got money once more, and in the dirtiest way, he puts on the top-sawyer just as if there was nothing to be ashamed of. If he and his mother were living in a small way on their few hundreds a year, he might haw-haw as much as he liked, and I should only laugh at him; he'd be a fool, but an honest one. But catch them doing that! Family pride's too insubstantial a thing, you see. Well, as I said, they illustrate the natural course of things, the transition from the old age to the new. If Eldon has sons, they'll go in for commerce, and make themselves, if they can, millionaires; but by that time they'll dispense with airs and insolence—see if they don't.'

Adela kept her eyes on the pages before her, but she was listening intently. A sort of verisimilitude in the picture drawn by her Radical-minded brother could not escape her; her thought was troubled. When she spoke it was without resentment, but gravely.

'I don't like this spirit in judging of people. You know quite well, Alfred, how easy it is to see the whole story in quite another way. You begin by a harsh and worldly judgment, and it leads you to misrepresent all that follows. I refuse to believe that Godrey Eldon married Mrs. Mutimer's daughter for her money.'

Alfred laughed aloud.

'Of course you do, sister Adela! Women won't admit such things; that's *their* aristocratic feeling!'

'And is that, too, worthless and a sham? Will that, too, be done away with in the new age?'

'Oh, depend upon it! When women are educated, they will take the world as it is, and decline to live on illusions.'

'Then how glad I am to have been left without education!'

In the meantime a conversation of a very lively kind was in progress between Mrs. Waltham and her visitor Mrs. Mewling. The latter was a lady whose position much resembled Mrs. Waltham's: she inhabited a small house in the village street, and spent most of her time in going about to hear or to tell some new thing. She came in this evening with a look presageful of news indeed.

'I've been to Belwick to-day,' she began, sitting very close to Mrs. Waltham, whose lap

she kept touching as she spoke with excited fluency. 'I've seen Mrs. Yottle. My dear, what *do* you think she has told me?'

Mrs. Yottle was the wife of a legal gentleman who had been in Mr. Mutimer's confidence. Mrs. Waltham at once divined intelligence affecting the Eldons.

'What?' she asked eagerly.

'You'd never dream such a thing! what *will* come to pass! An unthought-of possibility!' She went on *crescendo*. 'My dear Mrs. Waltham, Mr. Mutimer has left no will!'

It was as if an electric shock had passed from the tips of her fingers into her hearer's frame. Mrs. Waltham paled.

'That cannot be true!' she whispered, incapable of utterance above breath.

'Oh, but there's not a doubt of it!' Knowing that the news would be particularly unpalatable to Mrs. Waltham, she proceeded to dwell upon it with dancing eyes. 'Search has been going on since the day of the death: not a corner that hasn't been rummaged, not a drawer that hasn't been turned out, not a book in the library that hasn't been shaken, not a wall that hasn't been examined for secret doors! Mr. Mutimer has died intestate!'

The other lady was mute.

'And shall I tell you how it came about? Two days before his death, he had his will from

Mr. Yottle, saying he wanted to make changes—probably to execute a new will altogether. My dear, he destroyed it, and death surprised him before he could make another.'

'He wished to make changes?'

'Ah!' Mrs. Mewling drew out the exclamation, shaking her raised finger, pursing her lips. 'And of that, too, I can tell you the reason. Mr. Mutimer was anything but pleased with young Eldon. That young man, let me tell you, has been conducting himself—oh, shockingly! Now you wouldn't dream of repeating this?'

'Certainly not.'

'It seems that news came not so very long ago of a certain actress, singer,—something of the kind, you understand? Friends thought it their duty—rightly, of course,—to inform Mr. Mutimer. I can't say exactly who did it; but we know that Hubert Eldon is not regarded affectionately by a good many people. My dear, he has been out of England for more than a month, living—oh, such extravagance! And the moral question, too! You know—those women! Someone, they say, of European reputation; of course no names are breathed. For my part, I can't say I am surprised. Young men, you know; and particularly young men of that kind! Well, it has cost him a pretty penny; he'll remember it as long as he lives.'

'Then the property will go——'

'Yes, to the working people in London; the roughest of the rough, they say! What *will* happen? It will be impossible for us to live here if they come and settle at the Manor. The neighbourhood will be intolerable. Think of the rag-tag-and-bobtail they will bring with them!'

'But Hubert!' ejaculated Mrs. Waltham, whom this vision of barbaric onset affected little in the crashing together of a great airy castle.

'Well, my dear, after all he still has more to depend upon than many we could instance. Probably he will take to the law,—that is, if he ever returns to England.'

'He is at the Manor,' said Mrs. Waltham, with none of the pleasure it would ordinarily have given her to be first with an item of news. 'He came this afternoon.'

'He did! Who has seen him?'

'Alfred and Adela passed him on the road. He was in a cab.'

'I feel for his poor mother. What a meeting it will be! But then we must remember that they had no actual claim on the inheritance. Of course it will be a most grievous disappointment, but what is life made of? I'm afraid some people will be anything but grieved. We must confess that Hubert has not been exactly

popular; and I rather wonder at it; I'm sure he might have been if he had liked. Just a little too—too self-conscious, don't you think? Of course it was quite a mistake, but people had an idea that he presumed on wealth which was not his own. Well, well, we quiet folk look on, don't we? It's rather like a play.'

Presently Mrs. Mewling leaned forward yet more confidentially.

'My dear, you won't be offended? You don't mind a question? There wasn't anything definite?—Adela, I mean.'

'Nothing, nothing whatever!' Mrs. Waltham asserted with vigour.

'Ha!' Mrs. Mewling sighed deeply. 'How relieved I am! I did so fear!'

'Nothing whatever,' the other lady repeated.

'Thank goodness! Then there is no need to breathe a word of those shocking matters. But they do get abroad so!'

A reflection Mrs. Mewling was justified in making.

CHAPTER II.

The cab which had passed Adela and her brother at a short distance from Wanley brought faces to the windows or door of almost every house as it rolled through the village street. The direction in which it was going, the trunk on the roof, the certainty that it had come from Agworth station, suggested to everyone that young Eldon sat within. The occupant had, however, put up both windows just before entering the village, and sight of him was not obtained. Wanley had abundant matter for gossip that evening. Hubert's return, giving a keener edge to the mystery of his so long delay, would alone have sufficed to wagging tongues; but, in addition, Mrs. Mewling was on the war-path, and the intelligence she spread was of a kind to run like wildfire.

The approach to the Manor was a carriage-road, obliquely ascending the hill from a point some quarter of a mile beyond the cottages which once housed Belwick's abbots. Of the

house scarcely a glimpse could be caught till you were well within the gates, so thickly was it embosomed in trees. This afternoon it wore a cheerless face; most of the blinds were still down, and the dwelling might have been unoccupied, for any sign of human activity that the eye could catch. There was no porch at the main entrance, and the heavy nail-studded door greeted a visitor somewhat sombrely. On the front of a gable stood the words 'Nisi Dominus.'

The vehicle drew up, and there descended a young man of pale countenance, his attire indicating long and hasty travel. He pulled vigorously at the end of a hanging bell-chain, and the door was immediately opened by a man-servant in black. Hubert, for he it was, pointed to his trunk, and, whilst it was being carried into the house, took some loose coin from his pocket. He handed the driver a sovereign.

'I have no change, sir,' said the man after examining the coin.

But Hubert had already turned away; he merely waved his hand, and entered the house. For a drive of two miles, the cabman held himself tolerably paid.

The hall was dusky, and seemed in need of fresh air. Hubert threw off his hat, gloves, and overcoat; then for the first time spoke to

the servant, who stood in an attitude of expectancy.

'Mrs. Eldon is at home?'

'At home, sir, but very unwell. She desires me to say that she fears she may not be able to see you this evening.'

'Is there a fire anywhere?'

'Only in the library, sir.'

'I will dine there. And let a fire be lit in my bedroom.'

'Yes, sir. Will you dine at once, sir?'

'In an hour. Something light; I don't care what it is.'

'Shall the fire be lit in your bedroom at once, sir?'

'At once, and a hot bath prepared. Come to the library and tell me when it is ready.'

The servant silently departed. Hubert walked across the hall, giving a glance here and there, and entered the library. Nothing had been altered here since his father's, nay, since his grandfather's, time. That grandfather—his name Hubert—had combined strong intellectual tendencies with the extravagant tastes which gave his already tottering house the decisive push. The large collection of superbly-bound books which this room contained were nearly all of his purchasing, for prior to his time the Eldons had not been wont to concern themselves with things of the mind. Hubert, after walking to

the window and looking out for a moment on a side lawn, pushed a small couch near to the fireplace, and threw himself down at full length, his hands beneath his head. In a moment his position seemed to have become uneasy; he turned upon his side, uttering an exclamation as if of pain. A minute or two and again he moved, this time with more evident impatience. The next thing he did was to rise, step to the bell, and ring it violently.

The same servant appeared.

'Isn't the bath ready?' Hubert asked. His former mode of speaking had been brief and decided; he was now almost imperious.

'I believe it will be in a moment, sir,' was the reply, marked, perhaps, by just a little failure in the complete subservience expected.

Hubert looked at the man for an instant with contracted brows, but merely said—'Tell them to be quick.'

The man returned in less than three minutes with a satisfactory announcement, and Eldon went upstairs to refresh himself.

Two hours later he had dined, with obvious lack of appetite, and was deriving but slight satisfaction from a cigar, when the servant entered with a message from Mrs. Eldon: she desired to see her son.

Hubert threw his cigar aside, and made a gesture expressing his wish to be led to his

mother's room. The man conducted him to the landing at the head of the first flight of stairs; there a female servant was waiting, who, after a respectful movement, led the way to a door at a few yards' distance. She opened it and drew back. Hubert passed into the room.

It was furnished in a very old-fashioned style —heavily, richly, and with ornaments seemingly procured rather as evidences of wealth than of taste; successive Mrs. Eldons had used it as a boudoir. The present lady of that name sat in a great chair near the fire. Though not yet fifty, she looked at least ten years older; her hair had streaks of white, and her thin delicate features were much lined and wasted. It would not be enough to say that she had evidently once been beautiful, for in truth she was so still, with a spiritual beauty of a very rare type. Just now her face was set in a sternness which did not seem an expression natural to it; the fine lips were much more akin to smiling sweetness, and the brows accepted with repugnance anything but the stamp of thoughtful charity.

After the first glance at Hubert she dropped her eyes. He, stepping quickly across the floor, put his lips to her cheek; she did not move her head, nor raise her hand to take his.

'Will you sit there, Hubert?' she said,

pointing to a chair which was placed opposite hers. The resemblance between her present mode of indicating a wish and her son's way of speaking to the servant below was very striking; even the quality of their voices had much in common, for Hubert's was rather high-pitched. In face, however, the young man did not strongly evidence their relation to each other: he was not handsome, and had straight low brows, which made his aspect at first forbidding.

'Why have you not come to me before this?' Mrs. Eldon asked when her son had seated himself, with his eyes turned upon the fire.

'I was unable to, mother. I have been ill.'

She cast a glance at him. There was no doubting the truth of what he said; at this moment he looked feeble and pain-worn.

'Where did your illness come upon you?' she asked, her tone unsoftened.

'In Germany. I started only a few hours after receiving the letter in which you told me of the death.'

'My other letters you paid no heed to?'

'I could not reply to them.'

He spoke after hesitation, but firmly, as one does who has something to brave out.

'It would have been better for you if you

had been able, Hubert. Your refusal has cost you dear.'

He looked up inquiringly.

'Mr. Mutimer,' his mother continued, a tremor in her voice, 'destroyed his will a day or two before he died.'

Hubert said nothing. His fingers, locked together before him, twitched a little; his face gave no sign.

'Had you come to me at once,' Mrs. Eldon pursued, 'had you listened to my entreaties, to my commands'—her voice rang right queenly—'this would not have happened. Mr. Mutimer behaved as generously as he always has. As soon as there came to him certain news of you, he told me everything. I refused to believe what people were saying, and he too wished to do so. He would not write to you himself; there was one all-sufficient test, he held, and that was a summons from your mother. It was a test of your honour, Hubert—and you failed under it.'

He made no answer.

'You received my letters?' she went on to ask. 'I heard you had gone from England, and could only hope your letters would be forwarded. Did you get them?'

'With the delay of only a day or two.'

'And deliberately you put me aside?'

'I did.'

She looked at him now for several moments. Her eyes grew moist. Then she resumed, in a lower voice—

'I said nothing of what was at stake, though I knew. Mr. Mutimer was perfectly open with me. "I have trusted him implicitly," he said, "because I believe him as staunch and true as his brother. I make no allowances for what are called young man's follies: he must be above anything of that kind. If he is not—well, I have been mistaken in him, and I can't deal with him as I wish to do." You know what he was, Hubert, and you can imagine him speaking those words. We waited. The bad news was confirmed, and from you there came nothing. I would not hint at the loss you were incurring; of my own purpose I should have refrained from doing so, and Mr. Mutimer forbade me to appeal to anything but your better self. If you would not come to me because I wished it, I could not involve you and myself in shame by seeing you yield to sordid motives.'

Hubert raised his head. A choking voice kept him silent, for a moment only.

'Mother, the loss is nothing to you; you are above regrets of that kind; and for myself, I am almost glad to have lost it.'

'In very truth,' answered the mother, 'I care little about the wealth you might have

possessed. What I do care for is the loss of all the hopes I had built upon you. I thought you honour itself; I thought you high-minded. Young as you are, I let you go from me without a fear. Hubert, I would have staked my life that no shadow of disgrace would ever fall upon your head! You have taken from me the last comfort of my age.'

He uttered words she could not catch.

'The purity of your soul was precious to me,' she continued, her accents struggling against weakness; 'I thought I had seen in you a love of that chastity without which a man is nothing; and I ever did my best to keep your eyes upon a noble ideal of womanhood. You have fallen. The simpler duty, the point of every-day honour, I could not suppose that you would fail in. From the day when you came of age, when Mr. Mutimer spoke to you, saying that in every respect you would be as his son, and you, for your part, accepted what he offered, you owed it to him to respect the lightest of his reasonable wishes. The wish which was supreme in him you have utterly disregarded. Is it that you failed to understand him? I have thought of late of a way you had now and then when you spoke to me about him; it has occurred to me that perhaps you did him less than justice. Regard his position and mine, and tell me whether you think he could

have become so much to us if he had not been a gentleman in the highest sense of the word. When Godfrey first of all brought me that proposal from him that we should still remain in this house, it seemed to me the most impossible thing. You know what it was that induced me to assent, and what led to his becoming so intimate with us. Since then it has been hard for me to remember that he was not one of our family. His weak points it was not difficult to discover; but I fear you did not understand what was noblest in his character. Uprightness, clean-heartedness, good faith—these things he prized before everything. In you, in one of your birth, he looked to find them in perfection. Hubert, I stood shamed before him.'

The young man breathed hard, as if in physical pain. His eyes were fixed in a wide absent gaze. Mrs. Eldon had lost all the severity of her face; the profound sorrow of a pure and noble nature was alone to be read there now.

'What,' she continued—'what is this class distinction upon which we pride ourselves? What does it mean, if not that our opportunities lead us to see truths to which the eyes of the poor and ignorant are blind? Is there nothing in it, after all—in our pride of birth and station? That is what people are saying nowadays: you yourself have jested to me about our privileges. You almost make me dread

that you were right. Look back at that man, whom I came to honour as my own father. He began life as a toiler with his hands. Only a fortnight ago he was telling me stories of his boyhood, of seventy years since. He was without education; his ideas of truth and goodness he had to find within his own heart. Could anything exceed the noble simplicity of his respect for me, for you boys. We were poor, but it seemed to him that we had from nature what no money could buy. He was wrong; his faith misled him. No, not wrong with regard to all of us; my boy Godfrey was indeed all that he believed. But think of himself; what advantage have we over him? I know no longer what to believe. Oh, Hubert!'

He left his chair and walked to a more distant part of the room, where he was beyond the range of lamp and firelight. Standing here, he pressed his hand against his side, still breathing hard, and with difficulty suppressing a groan.

He came a step or two nearer.

'Mother,' he said, hurriedly, 'I am still far from well. Let me leave you: speak to me again to-morrow.'

Mrs. Eldon made an effort to rise, looking anxiously into the gloom where he stood. She was all but standing upright—a thing she had not done for a long time—when Hubert sprang

towards her, seizing her hands, then supporting her in his arms. Her self-command gave way at length, and she wept.

Hubert placed her gently in the chair and knelt beside her. He could find no words, but once or twice raised his face and kissed her.

'What caused your illness?' she asked, speaking as one wearied with suffering. She lay back, and her eyes were closed.

'I cannot say,' he answered. 'Do not speak of me. In your last letter there was no account of how he died.'

'It was in church, at the morning service. The pew-opener found him sitting there dead, when all had gone away.'

'But the vicar could see into the pew from the pulpit? The death must have been very peaceful.'

'No, he could not see; the front curtains were drawn.'

'Why was that, I wonder?'

Mrs. Eldon shook her head.

'Are you in pain?' she asked suddenly. 'Why do you breathe so strangely?'

'A little pain. Oh, nothing; I will see Manns to-morrow.'

His mother gazed long and steadily into his eyes, and this time he bore her look.

'Mother, you have not kissed me,' he whispered.

'And cannot, dear. There is too much between us.'

His head fell upon her lap.

'Hubert!'

He pressed her hand.

'How shall I live when you have gone from me again? When you say good-bye, it will be as if I parted from you for ever.'

Hubert was silent.

'Unless,' she continued—'unless I have your promise that you will no longer dishonour yourself.'

He rose from her side and stood in front of the fire; his mother looked and saw that he trembled.

'No promise, Hubert,' she said, 'that you cannot keep. Rather than that, we will accept our fate, and be nothing to each other.'

'You know very well, mother, that that is impossible. I cannot speak to you of what drove me to disregard your letters. I love and honour you, and shall have to change my nature before I cease to do so.'

'To me, Hubert, you seem already to have changed. I scarcely know you.'

'I can't defend myself to you,' he said sadly. 'We think so differently on subjects which allow of no compromise, that, even if I could speak openly, you would only condemn me the more.'

His mother turned upon him a grief-stricken and wondering face.

'Since when have we differed so?' she asked. 'What has made us strangers to each other's thoughts? Surely, surely you are at one with me in condemning all that has led to this? If your character has been too weak to resist temptation, you cannot have learnt to make evil your good?'

He kept silence.

'You refuse me that last hope?'

Hubert moved impatiently.

'Mother, I can't see beyond to-day! I know nothing of what is before me. It is the idlest trifling with words to say one will do this or that, when action in no way depends on one's own calmer thought. In this moment I could promise anything you ask; if I had my choice, I would be a child again and have no desire but to do your will, to be worthy in your eyes. I hate my life and the years that have parted me from you. Let us talk no more of it.'

Neither spoke again for some moments; then Hubert asked coldly—

'What has been done?'

'Nothing,' replied Mrs. Eldon, in the same tone. 'Mr. Yottle has waited for your return before communicating with the relatives in London.'

'I will go to Belwick in the morning,' he said. Then, after reflection, 'Mr. Mutimer told you that he had destroyed his will?'

'No. He had it from Mr. Yottle two days before his death, and on the day after—the Monday—Mr. Yottle was to have come to receive instructions for a new one. It is nowhere to be found: of course it was destroyed.'

'I suppose there is no doubt of that?' Hubert asked, with a show of indifference.

'There can be none. Mr. Yottle tells me that a will which existed before Godfrey's marriage was destroyed in the same way.'

'Who is the heir?'

'A great-nephew bearing the same name. The will contained provision for him and certain of his family. Wanley is his; the personal property will be divided among several.'

'The people have not come forward?'

'We presume they do not even know of Mr. Mutimer's death. There has been no direct communication between him and them for many years.'

Hubert's next question was, 'What shall you do, mother?'

'Does it interest you, Hubert? I am too feeble to move very far. I must find a home either here in the village or at Agworth.'

He looked at her with compassion, with remorse.

'And you, my boy?' asked his mother, raising her eyes gently.

'I? Oh, the selfish never come to harm, be sure! Only the gentle and helpless have to suffer; that is the plan of the world's ruling.'

'The world is not ruled by one who thinks our thoughts, Hubert.'

He had it on his lips to make a rejoinder, but checked the impulse.

'Say good-night to me,' his mother continued. 'You must go and rest. If you still feel unwell in the morning, a messenger shall go to Belwick. You are very, very pale.'

Hubert held his hand to her and bent his head. Mrs. Eldon offered her cheek; he kissed it and went from the room.

At seven o'clock on the following morning a bell summoned a servant to Hubert's bedroom. Though it was daylight, a lamp burned near the bed; Hubert lay against pillows heaped high.

'Let someone go at once for Dr. Manns,' he said, appearing to speak with difficulty. 'I wish to see him as soon as possible. Mrs. Eldon is to know nothing of his visit—you understand me?'

The servant withdrew. In rather less than an hour the doctor made his appearance, with every sign of having been interrupted in his

repose. He was a spare man, full bearded and spectacled.

'Something wrong?' was his greeting as he looked keenly at his summoner. 'I didn't know you were here.'

'Yes,' Hubert replied, 'something is confoundedly wrong. I have been playing strange tricks in the night, I fancy.'

'Fever?'

'As a consequence of something else. I shall have to tell you what must be repeated to no one, as of course you will see. Let me see, when was it?—Saturday to-day? Ten days ago, I had a pistol-bullet just here,'—he touched his right side. 'It was extracted, and I seemed to be not much the worse. I have just come from Germany.'

Dr. Manns screwed his face into an expression of sceptical amazement.

'At present,' Hubert continued, trying to laugh, 'I feel considerably the worse. I don't think I could move if I tried. In a few minutes, ten to one, I shall begin talking foolery. You must keep people away; get what help is needed. I may depend upon you?'

The doctor nodded, and, whistling low, began an examination.

CHAPTER III.

On the dun borderland of Islington and Hoxton, in a corner made by the intersection of the New North Road and the Regent's Canal, is discoverable an irregular triangle of small dwelling-houses, bearing the name of Wilton Square. In the midst stands an amorphous structure, which on examination proves to be a very ugly house and a still uglier Baptist chapel built back to back. The pair are enclosed within iron railings, and, more strangely, a circle of trees, which in due season do veritably put forth green leaves. One side of the square shows a second place of worship, the resort, as an inscription declares, of 'Welsh Calvinistic Methodists.' The houses are of one story, with kitchen windows looking upon small areas; the front door is reached by an ascent of five steps.

The canal—*maladetta e sventurata fossa*—stagnating in utter foulness between coal-wharfs and builders' yards, at this point divides two

neighbourhoods of different aspects. On the south is Hoxton, a region of malodorous market streets, of factories, timber-yards, grimy warehouses, of alleys swarming with small trades and crafts, of filthy courts and passages leading into pestilential gloom; everywhere toil in its most degrading forms; the thoroughfares thundering with high-laden waggons, the pavements trodden by working folk of the coarsest type, the corners and lurking-holes showing destitution at its ugliest. Walking northwards, the explorer finds himself in freer air, amid broader ways, in a district of dwelling-houses only; the roads seem abandoned to milkmen, cat's-meat vendors, and costermongers. Here will be found streets in which every window has its card advertising lodgings; others claim a higher respectability, the houses retreating behind patches of garden-ground, and occasionally showing plastered pillars and a balcony. The change is from undisguised struggle for subsistence to mean and spirit-broken leisure; hither retreat the better-paid of the great slave-army when they are free to eat and sleep. To walk about a neighbourhood such as this is the dreariest exercise to which man can betake himself; the heart is crushed by uniformity of decent squalor; one remembers that each of these dead-faced houses, often each separate blind window, represents a

'home,' and the associations of the word whisper blank despair.

Wilton Square is on the north side of the foss, on the edge of the quieter district, and in one of its houses dwelt at the time of which I write the family on whose behalf Fate was at work in a valley of mid-England. Joseph Mutimer, nephew to the old man who had just died at Wanley Manor, had himself been at rest for some five years; his widow and three children still lived together in the home they had long occupied. Joseph came of a family of mechanics; his existence was that of the harmless necessary artisan. He earned a living by dint of incessant labour, brought up his family in an orderly way, and departed with a certain sense of satisfaction at having fulfilled obvious duties—the only result of life for which he could reasonably look. With his children we shall have to make closer acquaintance; but before doing so, in order to understand their position and follow with intelligence their several stories, it will be necessary to enter a little upon the subject of ancestry.

Joseph Mutimer's father, Henry by name, was a somewhat remarkable personage. He grew to manhood in the first decade of our century, and wrought as a craftsman in a Midland town. He had a brother, Richard, some ten years his junior, and the two were of such

different types of character, each so pronounced in his kind, that, after vain attempts to get along together, they parted for good, heedless of each other henceforth, pursuing their sundered destinies. Henry was by nature a political enthusiast, of insufficient ballast, careless of the main chance, of hot and ready tongue; the Chartist movement gave him opportunities of action which he used to the utmost, and he became a member of the so-called National Convention, established in Birmingham in 1839. Already he had achieved prominence by being imprisoned as the leader of a torch-light procession, and this taste of martyrdom naturally sharpened his zeal. He had married young, but only visited his family from time to time. His wife for the most part earned her own living, and ultimately betook herself to London with her son Joseph, the single survivor of seven children. Henry pursued his career of popular agitation, supporting himself in miscellaneous ways, writing his wife an affectionate letter once in six months, and making himself widely known as an uncompromising Radical of formidable powers. Newspapers of that time mention his name frequently; he was always in hot water, and once or twice narrowly escaped transportation. In 1842 he took active part in the riots of the Midland Counties, and at length was unfortunate enough to get his head broken. He died in hospital before any relative could reach him.

Richard Mutimer regarded with detestation the principles to which Henry had sacrificed his life. From childhood he was staid, earnest, iron-willed; to whatsoever he put his hand, he did it thoroughly, and it was his pride to receive aid from no man. Intensely practical, he early discerned the truth that a man's first object must be to secure himself a competency, seeing that to one who lacks money the world is but a great debtors' prison. To make money, therefore, was his aim, and anything that interfered with the interests of commerce and industry from the capitalist's point of view he deemed unmitigated evil. When his brother Henry was leading processions and preaching the People's Charter, Richard enrolled himself as a special constable, cursing the tumults which drew him from business, but determined, if he got the opportunity, to strike a good hard blow in defence of law and order. Already he was well on the way to possess a solid stake in the country, and the native conservatism of his temperament grew stronger as circumstances bent themselves to his will; a proletarian conquering wealth and influence naturally prizes these things in proportion to the effort their acquisition has cost him. When he heard of his brother's death, he could in conscience say nothing more than 'Serve him right!' For all that, he paid the funeral expenses of the Chartist

—angrily declining an offer from Henry's co-zealots, who would have buried the martyr at their common charges—and proceeded to inquire after the widow and son. Joseph Mutimer, already one or two-and-twenty, was in no need of help; he and his mother, naturally prejudiced against the thriving uncle, declared themselves satisfied with their lot, and desired no further connection with a relative who was practically a stranger to them.

So Richard went on his way and heaped up riches. When already middle-aged he took to himself a wife, his choice being marked with characteristic prudence. The woman he wedded was turned thirty, had no money and few personal charms, but was a lady. Richard was fully able to appreciate education and refinement; to judge from the course of his later life, one would have said that he had sought money only as a means, the end he really aimed at being the satisfaction of instincts which could only have full play in a higher social sphere. No doubt the truth was that success sweetened his character, and developed, as is so often the case, those possibilities of his better nature which a fruitless struggle would have kept in the germ or altogether crushed. His excellent wife influenced him profoundly; at her death the work was continued by the daughter she left him. The defects of his early education

could not of course be repaired, but it is never too late for a man to go to school to the virtues which civilise. Remaining the sturdiest of Conservatives, he bowed in sincere humility to those very claims which the Radical most angrily disallows: birth, hereditary station, recognised gentility—these things made the strongest demand upon his reverence. Such an attitude was a testimony to his own capacity for culture, since he knew not the meaning of vulgar adulation, and did in truth perceive the beauty of those qualities to which the uneducated Iconoclast is wholly blind. It was a joyous day for him when he saw his daughter the wife of Godfrey Eldon. The loss which so soon followed was correspondingly hard to bear, and but for Mrs. Eldon's gentle sympathy he would scarcely have survived the blow. We know already how his character had impressed that lady; such respect was not lightly to be won, and he came to regard it as the most precious thing that life had left him.

But the man was not perfect, and his latest practical undertaking curiously enough illustrated the failing which he seemed most completely to have outgrown. It was of course a deplorable error to think of mining in the beautiful valley which had once been the Eldons' estate. Richard Mutimer could not perceive that. He was a very old man, and possibly the

instincts of his youth revived as his mind grew feebler; he imagined it the greatest kindness to Mrs. Eldon and her son to increase as much as possible the value of the property he would leave at his death. They, of course, could not even hint to him the pain with which they viewed so barbarous a scheme; he did not as much as suspect a possible objection. Intensely happy in his discovery and the activity to which it led, he would have gone to his grave rich in all manner of content but for that fatal news which reached him from London, where Hubert Eldon was supposed to be engaged in sober study in an interval of University work. Doubtless it was this disappointment that caused his sudden death, and so brought about a state of things which, could he have foreseen it, would have occasioned him the bitterest grief.

He had never lost sight of his relatives in London, and had made for them such modest provision as suited his view of the fitness of things. To leave wealth to young men of the working class would have seemed to him the most inexcusable of follies; if such were to rise at all, it must be by their own efforts and in consequence of their native merits; otherwise, let them toil on and support themselves honestly. From secret sources he received information of the capabilities and prospects of Joseph Mutimer's children, and the items of his will were regulated accordingly.

So we return to the family in Wilton Square. Let us, before proceeding with the story, enumerate the younger Mutimers. The first-born, now aged five-and-twenty, had his great-uncle's name; Joseph Mutimer, married, and no better off in worldly possessions than when he had only himself to support, came to regret the coldness with which he had received the advances of his uncle the capitalist, and christened his son Richard, with half a hope that some day the name might stand the boy in stead. Richard was a mechanical engineer, employed in certain ironworks where hydraulic machinery was made. The second child was a girl, upon whom had been bestowed the names Alice Maud, after one of the Queen's daughters; on which account, and partly with reference to certain personal characteristics, she was often called 'the Princess.' Her age was nineteen, and she had now for two years been employed in the show-rooms of a City warehouse. Last comes Henry, a lad of seventeen; he had been suffered to aim at higher things than the rest of the family. In the industrial code of precedence the rank of clerk is a step above that of mechanic, and Henry—known to relatives and friends as 'Arry—occupied the proud position of clerk in a drain-pipe manufactory.

CHAPTER IV.

At ten o'clock on the evening of Easter Sunday, Mrs. Mutimer was busy preparing supper. She had laid the table for six, had placed at one end of it a large joint of cold meat, at the other a vast rice-pudding, already diminished by attack, and she was now slicing a conglomerate mass of cold potatoes and cabbage prior to heating it in the frying-pan, which hissed with melted dripping just on the edge of the fire. The kitchen was small, and everywhere reflected from some bright surface either the glow of the open grate or the yellow lustre of the gas-jet; red curtains drawn across the window added warmth and homely comfort to the room. It was not the kitchen of pinched or slovenly working folk; the air had a scent of cleanliness, of freshly scrubbed boards and polished metal, and the furniture was superabundant. On the capacious dresser stood or hung utensils innumerable; cupboards and

chairs had a struggle for wall space; every smallest object was in the place assigned to it by use and wont.

The housewife was an active woman of something less than sixty; stout, fresh-featured, with a small keen eye, a firm mouth, and the look of one who, conscious of responsibilities, yet feels equal to them; on the whole a kindly and contented face, if lacking the suggestiveness which comes of thought. At present she seemed on the verge of impatience; it was supper time, but her children lingered.

'There they are, and there they must wait, I s'pose,' she murmured to herself as she finished slicing the vegetables and went to remove the pan a little from the fire.

A knock at the house door called her upstairs. She came down again, followed by a young girl of pleasant countenance, though pale and anxious-looking. The visitor's dress was very plain, and indicated poverty; she wore a long black jacket, untrimmed, a boa of cheap fur, tied at the throat with black ribbon, a hat of grey felt, black cotton gloves.

'No one here?' she asked, seeing the empty kitchen.

'Goodness knows where they all are. I s'pose Dick's at his meeting; but Alice and 'Arry had ought to be back by now. Sit you down to the table, and I'll put on the vege-

tables; there's no call to wait for them. Only I ain't got the beer.'

'Oh, but I didn't mean to come for supper,' said the girl, whose name was Emma Vine. 'I only ran in to tell you poor Jane's down again with rheumatic fever.'

Mrs. Mutimer was holding the frying-pan over the fire, turning the contents over and over with a knife.

'You don't mean that!' she exclaimed, looking over her shoulder. 'Why, it's the fifth time, ain't it?'

'It is indeed, and worse to get through every time. We didn't expect she'd ever be able to walk again last autumn.'

'Dear, dear! what a thing them rheumatics is, to be sure! And you've heard about Dick, haven't you?'

'Heard what?'

'Oh, I thought maybe it had got to you. He's lost his work, that's all.'

'Lost his work?' the girl repeated, with dismay. 'Why?'

'Why? What else had he to expect? 'Tain't likely they'll keep a man as goes about making all his mates discontented and calling his employers names at every street corner. I've been looking for it every week. Yesterday one of the guvnors calls him up and tells him—just in a few civil words—as perhaps it'ud be

better for all parties if he'd find a place where he was more satisfied. "Well an' good," says Dick—you know his way—and there he is.'

The girl had seated herself, and listened to this story with downcast eyes. Courage seemed to fail her; she drew a long, quiet sigh. Her face was of the kind that expresses much sweetness in irregular features. Her look was very honest and gentle, with pathetic meanings for whoso had the eye to catch them; a peculiar mobility of the lips somehow made one think that she had often to exert herself to keep down tears. She spoke in a subdued voice, always briefly, and with a certain natural refinement in the use of uncultured language. When Mrs. Mutimer ceased, Emma kept silence, and smoothed the front of her jacket with an unconscious movement of the hand.

Mrs. Mutimer glanced at her and showed commiseration.

'Well, well, don't you worrit about it, Emma,' she said; 'you've quite enough on your hands. Dick don't care—not he; he couldn't look more high-flyin' if someone had left him a fortune. He says it's the best thing as could happen. Nay, I can't explain; he'll tell you plenty soon as he gets in. Cut yourself some meat, child, do, and don't wait for me to help you. See, I'll turn you out some potatoes; you don't care for the greens, I know.'

The fry had hissed vigorously whilst this conversation went on; the results were brown and unctuous.

'Now, if it ain't too bad!' cried the old woman, losing self-control. 'That 'Arry gets later every Sunday, and he knows very well as I have to wait for the beer till he comes.'

'I'll fetch it,' said Emma, rising.

'You indeed! I'd like to see Dick if he caught me a-sending you to the public-house.'

'He won't mind it for once.'

'You get on with your supper, do. It's only my fidgetiness; I can do very well a bit longer. And Alice, where's she off to, I wonder? What it is to have a girl that age! I wish they was all like you, Emma. Get on with your supper, I tell you, or you'll make me angry. Now, it ain't no use taking it to 'eart in that way. I see what you're worritin' over. Dick ain't the man to be out o' work long.'

'But won't it be the same at his next place?' Emma inquired. She was trying to eat, but it was a sad pretence.

'Nay, there's no telling. It's no good my talkin' to him. Why don't you see what you can do, Emma? 'Tain't as if he'd no one but his own self to think about. Don't you think you could make him see that? If anyone has a right to speak it's you. Tell him as he'd

ought to have a bit more thought. It's wait, wait, wait, and likely to be if things go on like this. Speak up and tell him as——'

'Oh, I couldn't do that!' murmured Emma. 'Dick knows best.'

She stopped to listen; there was a noise above as of people entering the house.

'Here they come at last,' said Mrs. Mutimer. 'Hear him laughin'? Now, don't you be so ready to laugh with him. Let him see as it ain't such good fun to everybody.'

Heavy feet tramped down the stone stairs, amid a sound of loud laughter and excited talk. The next moment the kitchen door was thrown open, and two young men appeared. The one in advance was Richard Mutimer; behind him came a friend of the family, Daniel Dabbs.

'Well, what do you think of this?' Richard exclaimed as he shook Emma's hands rather carelessly. 'Mother been putting you out of spirits, I suppose? Why, it's grand; the best thing that could have happened! What a meeting we've had to-night! What do *you* say, Dan?'

Richard represented — too favourably to make him anything but an exception—the best qualities his class can show. He was the English artisan as we find him on rare occasions, the issue of a good strain which has managed to procure a sufficiency of food for two or three generations. His physique was admirable;

little short of six feet in stature, he had shapely shoulders, an erect well-formed head, clean strong limbs, and a bearing which in natural ease and dignity matched that of the picked men of the upper class—those fine creatures whose career, from public school to regimental quarters, is one exclusive course of bodily training. But the comparison, on the whole, was to Richard's advantage. By no possibility could he have assumed that aristocratic vacuity of visage which comes of carefully induced cerebral atrophy. The air of the workshop suffered little colour to dwell upon his cheeks; but to features of so pronounced and intelligent a type this pallor added a distinction. He had dark brown hair, thick and long, and a cropped beard of hue somewhat lighter. His eyes were his mother's—keen and direct; but they had small variety of expression; you could not imagine them softening to tenderness, or even to thoughtful dreaming. Terribly wide awake, they seemed to be always looking for the weak points of whatever they regarded, and their brightness was not seldom suggestive of malice. His voice was strong and clear; it would ring out well in public places, which is equivalent to saying that it hardly invited too intimate conference. You will take for granted that Richard displayed, alike in attitude and tone, a distinct consciousness of his points of superiority to the

men among whom he lived; probably he more than suspected that he could have held his own in spheres to which there seemed small chance of his being summoned.

Just now he showed at once the best and the weakest of his points. Coming in a state of exaltation from a meeting of which he had been the eloquent hero, such light as was within him flashed from his face freely; all the capacity and the vigour which impelled him to strain against the strait bonds of his lot set his body quivering and made music of his utterance. At the same time, his free movements passed easily into swagger, and as he talked on the false notes were not few. A working man gifted with brains and comeliness must, be sure of it, pay penalties for his prominence.

Quite another man was Daniel Dabbs: in him you saw the proletarian pure and simple. He was thick-set, square-shouldered, rolling in gait; he walked with head bent forward and eyes glancing uneasily, as if from lack of self-confidence. His wiry black hair shone with grease, and no accuracy of razor-play would make his chin white. A man of immense strength, but bull-necked and altogether ungainly—his heavy fist, with its black veins and terrific knuckles, suggested primitive methods of settling dispute; the stumpy fingers, engrimed hopelessly, and the filthy broken nails, showed

how he wrought for a living. His face, if you examined it without prejudice, was not ill to look upon ; there was much good humour about the mouth, and the eyes, shrewd enough, could glimmer a kindly light. His laughter was roof-shaking—always a good sign in a man.

'And what have *you* got to say of these fine doings, Mr. Dabbs?' Mrs. Mutimer asked him.

'Why, its like this 'ere, Mrs. Mutimer,' Daniel began, having seated himself, with hands on widely-parted knees. 'As far as the theory goes, I'm all for Dick; any man must be as knows his two times two. But about the Long-woods; well, I tell Dick they've a perfect right to get rid of him, finding him a dangerous enemy, you see. It was all fair and above board. Young Stephen Longwood ups an' says—leastways not in these words, but them as means the same—says he, "Look 'ere, Mutimer," he says, "we've no fault to find with you as a workman, but from what we hear of you, it seems you don't care much for us as employers. Hadn't you better find a shop as is run on Socialist principles?" That's all about it, you see; it's a case of incompatible temperaments; there's no ill-feelin', not as between man and man. And that's what I say, too.'

'Now, Dick,' said Mrs. Mutimer, 'before you begin your sermon, who's a-goin' to fetch my beer?'

'Right, Mrs. Mutimer!' cried Daniel, slapping his leg. 'That's what I call coming from theory to practice. Beer squares all—leastways for the time being—only for the time being, Dick. Where's the jug? Better give me two jugs; we've had a thirsty night of it.'

'We'll make capital of this!' said Richard, walking about the room in Daniel's absence. 'The great point gained is, they've shown they're afraid of me. We'll write it up in the paper next week, see if we don't! It'll do us a sight of good.'

'And where's your weekly wages to come from?' inquired his mother.

'Oh, I'll look after that. I only wish they'd refuse me all round; the more of that kind of thing the better for us. I'm not afraid but I can earn my living.'

Through all this Emma Vine had sat with her thoughtful eyes constantly turned on Richard. It was plain how pride struggled with anxiety in her mind. When Richard had kept silence for a moment, she ventured to speak, having tried in vain to meet his look.

'Jane's ill again, Richard,' she said.

Mutimer had to summon his thoughts from a great distance; his endeavour to look sympathetic was not very successful.

'Not the fever again?'

'Yes, it is,' she replied sadly.

'Going to work in the wet, I suppose?'

He shrugged his shoulders; in his present mood the fact was not so much personally interesting to him as in the light of another case against capitalism. Emma's sister had to go a long way to her daily employment, and could not afford to ride; the fifth attack of rheumatic fever was the price she paid for being permitted to earn ten shillings a week.

Daniel returned with both jugs foaming, his face on a broad grin of anticipation. There was a general move to the table. Richard began to carve roast beef like a freeman, not by any means like the serf he had repeatedly declared himself in the course of the evening's oratory.

'Her Royal 'Ighness out?' asked Daniel, with constraint not solely due to the fact that his mouth was full.

'She's round at Mrs. Took's, I should think,' was Mrs. Mutimer's reply. 'Staying supper, per'aps.'

Richard, after five minutes of surprising trencher-work, recommenced conversation. The proceedings of the evening at the hall, which was the centre for Socialist gatherings in this neighbourhood, were discussed by him and Daniel with much liveliness. Dan was disposed to take the meeting on its festive and humorous side; for him, economic agitation was a mode of passing a few hours amid congenial uproar.

Wherever stamping and shouting were called for, Daniel was your man. Abuse of employers, it was true, gave a zest to the occasion, and to applaud the martyrdom of others was as cheery an occupation as could be asked; Daniel had no idea of sacrificing his own weekly wages, and therein resembled most of those who had been loud in uncompromising rhetoric. Richard, on the other hand, was unmistakably zealous. His sense of humour was not strong, and in any case he would have upheld the serious dignity of his own position. One saw, from his way of speaking, that he believed himself about to become a popular hero; already in imagination he stood forth on platforms before vast assemblies, and heard his own voice denouncing capitalism with force which nothing could resist. The first taste of applause had given extraordinary impulse to his convictions, and the personal ambition with which they were interwoven. His grandfather's blood was hot in him to-night. Henry Mutimer, dying in hospital of his broken skull, would have found euthanasia, could he in vision have seen this worthy descendant entering upon a career in comparison with which his own was unimportant.

The high-pitched voices and the clatter of knives and forks allowed a new-comer to enter the kitchen without being immediately observed. It was a tall girl of interesting and vivacious

appearance; she wore a dress of tartan, a very small hat trimmed also with tartan and with a red feather, a tippet of brown fur about her shoulders, and a muff of the same material on one of her hands. Her figure was admirable; from the crest of her gracefully poised head to the tip of her well-chosen boot she was, in line and structure, the type of mature woman. Her face, if it did not indicate a mind to match her frame, was at the least sweet-featured and provoking; characterless somewhat, but void of danger-signals; doubtless too good to be merely played with; in any case, very capable of sending a ray, in one moment or another, to the shadowy dreaming-place of graver thoughts. Alice Maud Mutimer was nineteen. For two years she had been thus tall, but the grace of her proportions had only of late fully determined itself. Her work in the City warehouse was unexacting; she had even a faint impress of rose-petal on each cheek, and her eye was excellently clear. Her lips, unfortunately never quite closed, betrayed faultless teeth. Her likeness to Richard was noteworthy; beyond question she understood the charm of her presence, and one felt that the consciousness might, in her case, constitute rather a safeguard than otherwise.

She stood with one hand on the door, surveying the table. When the direction of Mrs.

Mutimer's eyes at length caused Richard and Daniel to turn their heads, Alice nodded to each.

'What noisy people! I heard you out in the square.'

She was moving past the table, but Daniel, suddenly backing his chair, intercepted her. The girl gave him her hand, and, by way of being jocose, he squeezed it so vehemently that she uttered a shrill 'Oh!'

'Leave go, Mr. Dabbs! Leave go, I tell you! How dare you? I'll hit you as hard as I can!'

Daniel laughed obstreperously.

'Do! do!' he cried. 'What a mighty blow that 'ud be! Only the left hand, though. I shall get over it.'

She wrenched herself away, gave Daniel a smart slap on the back, and ran round to the other side of the table, where she kissed Emma affectionately.

'How thirsty I am!' she exclaimed. 'You haven't drank all the beer, I hope.'

'I'm not so sure of that,' Dan replied. 'Why, there ain't more than 'arf a pint; that's not much use for a Royal 'Ighness.'

She poured it into a glass. Alice reached across the table, raised the glass to her lips, and—emptied it. Then she threw off hat, tippet, and gloves, and seated herself. But in a moment she was up and at the cupboard.

'Now, mother, you don't—you *don't* say as there's not a pickle!'

Her tone was deeply reproachful.

'Why, there now,' replied her mother, laughing; 'I knew what it 'ud be! I meant to a' got them last night. You'll have to make shift for once.'

The Princess took her seat with an air of much dejection. Her pretty lips grew mutinous; she pushed her plate away.

'No supper for me! The idea of cold meat without a pickle.'

'What's the time?' cried Daniel. 'Not closing time yet. I can get a pickle at the "Duke's Arms." Give me a glass, Mrs. Mutimer.'

Alice looked up slily, half smiling, half doubtful.

'You may go,' she said. 'I like to see strong men make themselves useful.'

Dan rose, and was off at once. He returned with the tumbler full of pickled walnuts. Alice emptied half a dozen into her plate, and put one of them whole into her mouth. She would not have been a girl of her class if she had not relished this pungent dainty. Fish of any kind, green vegetables, eggs and bacon, with all these a drench of vinegar was indispensable to her. And she proceeded to eat a supper scarcely less substantial than that which

had appeased her brother's appetite. Start not, dear reader; the Princess is only a subordinate heroine, and happens, moreover, to be a living creature.

'Won't you take a walnut, Miss Vine?' Daniel asked, pushing the tumbler to the quiet girl, who had scarcely spoken through the meal.

She declined the offered dainty, and at the same time rose from the table, saying aside to Mrs. Mutimer that she must be going.

'Yes, I suppose you must,' was the reply. 'Shall you have to sit up with Jane?'

'Not all night, I don't expect.'

Richard likewise left his place, and, when she offered to bid him good-night, said that he would walk a little way with her. In the passage above, which was gas-lighted, he found his hat on a nail, and the two left the house together.

'Don't you really mind?' Emma asked, looking up into his face as they took their way out of the square.

'Not I! I can get a job at Baldwin's any day. But I dare say I shan't want one long.'

'Not want work?'

He laughed.

'Work? Oh, plenty of work; but perhaps not the same kind. We want men who can give their whole time to the struggle—to go

about lecturing and the like. Of course, it isn't everybody can do it.'

The remark indicated his belief that he knew one man not incapable of leading functions.

'And would they pay you?' Emma inquired, simply.

'Expenses of that kind are inevitable,' he replied.

Issuing into the New North Road, where there were still many people hastening one way and the other, they turned to the left, crossed the canal—black and silent—and were soon among narrow streets. Every corner brought a whiff of some rank odour, which stole from closed shops and warehouses, and hung heavily on the still air. The public-houses had just extinguished their lights, and in the neighbourhood of each was a cluster of lingering men and women, merry or disputatious. Mid-Easter was inviting repose and festivity; to-morrow would see culmination of riot, and after that it would only depend upon pecuniary resources how long the muddled interval between holiday and renewed labour should drag itself out.

The end of their walk was the entrance to a narrow passage, which, at a few yards' distance, widened itself and became a street of four-storeyed houses. At present this could not be discerned; the passage was a mere opening

into massive darkness. Richard had just been making inquiries about Emma's sister.

'You've had the doctor?'

'Yes, we're obliged; she does so dread going to the hospital again. Each time she's longer in getting well.'

Richard's hand was in his pocket; he drew it out and pressed something against the girl's palm.

'Oh, how can I?' she said, dropping her eyes. 'No—don't—I'm ashamed.'

'That's all right,' he urged, not unkindly. 'You'll have to get her what the doctor orders, and it isn't likely you and Kate can afford it.'

'You're always so kind, Richard. But I am—I am ashamed!'

'I say, Emma, why don't you call me Dick? I've meant to ask you that many a time.'

She turned her face away, moving as if abashed.

'I don't know. It sounds—perhaps I want to make a difference from what the others call you.'

He laughed with a sound of satisfaction.

'Well, you mustn't stand here; it's a cold night. Try and come Tuesday or Wednesday.'

'Yes, I will.'

'Good night!' he said, and, as he held her hand, bent to the lips which were ready.

Emma walked along the passage, and for

some distance up the middle of the street. Then she stopped and looked up at one of the black houses. There were lights, more or less curtain-dimmed, in nearly all the windows. Emma regarded a faint gleam in the topmost storey. To that she ascended.

Mutimer walked homewards at a quick step, whistling to himself. A latch-key gave him admission. As he went down the kitchen stairs, he heard his mother's voice raised in anger, and on opening the door he found that Daniel had departed, and that the supper table was already cleared. Alice, her feet on the fender and her dress raised a little, was engaged in warming herself before going to bed. The object of Mrs. Mutimer's chastisement was the youngest member of the family, known as 'Arry; even Richard, who had learnt to be somewhat careful in his pronunciation, could not bestow the aspirate upon his brother's name. Henry, aged seventeen, promised to do credit to the Mutimers in physical completeness; already he was nearly as tall as his eldest brother; and, even in his lankness, showed the beginnings of well-proportioned vigour. But the shape of his head, which was covered with hair of the lightest hue, did not encourage hope of mental or moral qualities. It was not quite fair to judge his face as seen at present: the vacant grin of half timid, half insolent, resentment made him considerably

more simian of visage than was the case under ordinary circumstances. But the features were unpleasant to look upon; it was Richard's face, distorted and enfeebled with impress of sensual instincts.

'As long as you live in this house, it shan't go on,' his mother was saying. 'Sunday or Monday, it's no matter; you'll be home before eleven o'clock, and you'll come home sober. You're no better than a pig!'

'Arry was seated in a far corner of the room, where he had dropped his body on entering. His attire was such as the cheap tailors turn out in imitation of extreme fashions: trousers closely moulded upon the leg, a buff waistcoat, a short coat with pockets everywhere. A very high collar kept his head up against his will; his necktie was crimson, and passed through a brass ring; he wore a silver watch-chain, or what seemed to be such. One hand was gloved, and a cane lay across his knees. His attitude was one of relaxed muscles, his legs very far apart, his body not quite straight.

'What d' you call sober, I'd like to know?' he replied, with looseness of utterance. 'I'm as sober 's anybody in this room. If a chap can't go out with 's friends 't Easter an' all——?'

'Easter, indeed! It's getting to be a regular thing, Saturday and Sunday. Get up and

go to bed! I'll have my say out with you in the morning, young man.'

'Go to bed!' repeated the lad with scorn. 'Tell you I ain't had no supper.'

Richard had walked to the neighbourhood of the fireplace, and was regarding his brother with anger and contempt. At this point of the dialogue he interfered.

'And you won't have any, either, that I'll see to! What's more, you'll do as your mother bids you, or I'll know the reason why. Go upstairs at once!'

It was not a command to be disregarded. 'Arry rose, but half-defiantly.

'What have you got to do with it? You're not my master.'

'Do you hear what I say?' Richard observed, yet more autocratically. 'Take yourself off, and at once!'

The lad growled, hesitated, but approached the door. His motion was slinking; he could not face Richard's eye. They heard him stumble up the stairs.

CHAPTER V.

On ordinary days Richard of necessity rose early; a holiday did not lead him to break the rule, for free hours were precious. He had his body well under control; six hours of sleep he found sufficient to keep him in health, and temptations to personal ease, in whatever form, he resisted as a matter of principle.

Easter Monday found him down-stairs at half-past six. His mother would to-day allow herself another hour. 'Arry would be down just in time for breakfast, not daring to be late. The Princess might be looked for—— some time in the course of the morning; she was licensed.

Richard, for purposes of study, used the front parlour. In drawing up the blind, he disclosed a room precisely resembling in essential features hundreds of front parlours in that neighbourhood, or, indeed, in any working-class district of London. Everything was clean; most things were bright-hued or glistening of

surface. There was the gilt-framed mirror over the mantelpiece, with a yellow clock—which did not go—and glass ornaments in front. There was a small round table before the window, supporting wax fruit under a glass case. There was a hearthrug with a dazzling pattern of imaginary flowers. On the blue cloth of the middle table were four showily-bound volumes, arranged symmetrically. On the head of the sofa lay a covering worked of blue and yellow Berlin wools. Two arm-chairs were draped with long white antimacassars, ready to slip off at a touch. As in the kitchen, there was a smell of cleanliness,—of furniture polish, hearthstone, and black-lead.

I should mention the ornaments of the walls. The pictures were: a striking landscape of the Swiss type, an engraved portrait of Garibaldi, an unframed view of a certain insurance office, a British baby on a large scale from the Christmas number of an illustrated paper.

The one singular feature of the room was a small, glass-doored bookcase, full of volumes. They were all of Richard's purchasing; to survey them was to understand the man, at all events on his intellectual side. Without exception they belonged to that order of literature which, if studied exclusively and for its own sake,—as here it was,—brands a man indelibly, declaring at once the incompleteness of his

education and the deficiency of his instincts. Social, political, religious,—under these three heads the volumes classed themselves, and each class was represented by productions of the 'extreme' school. The books which a bright youth of fair opportunities reads as a matter of course, rejoices in for a year or two, then throws aside for ever, were here treasured to be the guides of a lifetime. Certain writers of the last century, long ago become only historically interesting, were for Richard an armoury whence he girded himself for the battles of the day; cheap reprints of translations of Malthus, of Robert Owen, of Volney's 'Ruins,' of Thomas Paine, of sundry works of Voltaire, ranked upon his shelves. Moreover, there was a large collection of pamphlets, titled wonderfully and of yet more remarkable contents, the authoritative utterances of contemporary gentlemen—and ladies—who made it the end of their existence to prove: that there cannot by any possibility be such a person as Satan; that the story of creation contained in the Book of Genesis is on no account to be received; that the begetting of children is a most deplorable oversight; that to eat flesh is wholly unworthy of a civilised being; that if every man and woman performed their quota of the world's labour it would be necessary to work for one hour and thirty-seven minutes daily, no jot longer, and that the author, in

each case, is the one person capable of restoring dignity to a down-trodden race and happiness to a blasted universe. Alas, alas! On this food had Richard Mutimer pastured his soul since he grew to manhood, on this and this only. English literature was to him a sealed volume; poetry he scarcely knew by name; of history he was worse than ignorant, having looked at this period and that through distorting media, and congratulating himself on his clear vision because he saw men as trees walking; the bent of his mind would have led him to natural science, but opportunities of instruction were lacking, and the chosen directors of his prejudice taught him to regard every fact, every discovery, as *for* or *against* something.

A library of pathetic significance, the individual alone considered. Viewed as representative, not without alarming suggestiveness to those who can any longer trouble themselves about the world's future. One dreams of the age when free thought—in the popular sense—will have become universal, when art shall have lost its meaning, worship its holiness, when the Bible will only exist in 'comic' editions, and Shakespeare be downcried by 'most sweet voices' as a mountebank of reactionary tendencies.

Richard was to lecture on the ensuing Sunday at one of the branch meeting-places of

his society; he engaged himself this morning in collecting certain data of a statistical kind. He was still at his work when the sound of the postman's knock began to be heard in the square, coming from house to house, drawing nearer at each repetition. Richard paid no heed to it; he expected no letter. Yet it seemed there was one for some member of the family; the letter-carrier's regular tread ascended the five steps to the door, and then two small thunder-claps echoed through the house. There was no letter-box; Richard went to answer the knock. An envelope addressed to himself in a small, formal hand.

His thoughts still busy with other things, he opened the letter mechanically as he re-entered the room. He had never in his life been calmer; the early hour of study had kept his mind pleasantly active whilst his breakfast appetite sharpened itself. Never was man less prepared to receive startling intelligence.

He read, then raised his eyes and let them stray from the papers on the table to the wax-fruit before the window, thence to the young leafage of the trees around the Baptist Chapel. He was like a man whose face had been over-flashed by lightning. He read again, then, holding the letter behind him, closed his right hand upon his beard with thoughtful tension. He read a third time, then returned the letter to

its envelope, put it in his pocket, and sat down again to his book.

He was summoned to breakfast in ten minutes. His mother was alone in the kitchen; she gave him his bloater and his cup of coffee, and he cut himself a solid slice of bread and butter.

'Was the letter for you?' she asked.

He replied with a nod, and fell patiently to work on the dissection of his bony delicacy. In five minutes Henry approached the table with a furtive glance at his elder brother. But Richard had no remark to make. The meal proceeded in silence.

When Richard had finished, he rose and said to his mother—

'Have you that railway-guide I brought home a week ago?'

'I believe I have somewhere. Just look in the cupboard.'

The guide was found. Richard consulted it for a few moments.

'I have to go out of London,' he then observed. 'It's just possible I shan't get back to-night.'

A little talk followed about the arrangements of the day, and whether anyone was likely to be at home for dinner. Richard did not show much interest in the matter; he went upstairs whistling, and changed the clothing he wore for

his best suit. In a quarter of an hour he had left the house.

He did not return till the evening of the following day. It was presumed that he had gone 'after a job.'

When he reached home his mother and Alice were at tea. He walked to the kitchen fireplace, turned his back to it, and gazed with a peculiar expression at the two who sat at table.

'Dick's got work,' observed Alice, after a glance at him. 'I can see that in his face.'

'Have you, Dick?' asked Mrs. Mutimer.

'I have. Work likely to last.'

'So we'll hope,' commented his mother. 'Where is it?'

'A good way out of London. Pour me a cup, mother. Where's 'Arry?'

'Gone out, as usual.'

'And why are you having tea with your hat on, Princess?'

'Because I'm in a hurry, if you must know everything.'

Richard did not seek further information. He drank his tea standing. In five minutes Alice had bustled away for an evening with friends. Mrs. Mutimer cleared the table without speaking.

'Now get your sewing, mother, and sit down,' began Richard. 'I want to have a talk with you.'

The mother cast a rather suspicious glance. There was an impressiveness in the young man's look and tone which disposed her to obey without remark.

'How long is it,' Richard asked, when attention waited upon him, 'since you heard anything of father's uncle, my namesake?'

Mrs. Mutimer's face exhibited the dawning of intelligence, an unwrinkling here and there, a slight rounding of the lips.

'Why, what of him?' she asked in an undertone, leaving a needle unthreaded.

'The old man's just dead.'

Agitation seized the listener, agitation of a kind most unusual in her. Her hands trembled, her eyes grew wide.

'You haven't heard anything of him lately?' pursued Richard.

'Heard? Not I. No more did your father ever since two years afore we was married. I'd always thought he was dead long ago. What of him, Dick?'

'From what I'm told I thought you'd perhaps been keeping things to yourself. 'Twouldn't have been unlike you, mother. He knew all about us, so the lawyer tells me.'

'The lawyer?'

'Well, I'd better out with it. He's died without a will. His real property—that means his houses and land—belongs to me; his per-

sonal property—that's his money—'ll have to be divided between me, and Alice, and 'Arry. You're out of the sharing, mother.'

He said it jokingly, but Mrs. Mutimer did not join in his laugh. Her palms were closely pressed together; still trembling, she gazed straight before her, with a far-off look.

'His houses—his land?' she murmured, as if she had not quite heard. 'What did he want with more than one house?'

The absurd question was all that could find utterance. She seemed to be reflecting on that point.

'Would you like to hear what it all comes to?' Richard resumed. His voice was unnatural, forcibly suppressed, quivering at pauses. His eyes gleamed, and there was a centre of warm colour on each of his cheeks. He had taken a note-book from his pocket, and the leaves rustled under his tremulous fingers.

'The lawyer, a man called Yottle, just gave me an idea of the different investments and so on. The real property consists of a couple of houses in Belwick, both let, and an estate at a place called Wanley. The old man had begun mining there; there's iron. I've got my ideas about that. I didn't go into the house; people are there still. Now the income.'

He read his notes: So much in railways, so much averaged yearly from iron-works in

Belwick, so much in foreign securities, so much disposable at home. Total——

'Stop, Dick, stop!' uttered his mother, under her breath. 'Them figures frighten me; I don't know what they mean. It's a mistake; they're leading you astray. Now, mind what I say—there's a mistake! No man with all that money 'ud die without a will. You won't get me to believe it, Dick.'

Richard laughed excitedly. 'Believe it or not, mother; I've got my ears and eyes, I hope. And there's a particular reason why he left no will. There was one, but something—I don't know what—happened just before his death, and he was going to make a new one. The will was burnt. He died in church on a Sunday morning; if he'd lived another day, he'd have made a new will. It's no more a mistake than the Baptist Chapel is in the square!' A comparison which hardly conveyed all Richard's meaning; but he was speaking in agitation, more and more quickly, at last almost angrily.

Mrs. Mutimer raised her hand. 'Be quiet a bit, Dick. It's took me too sudden. I feel queer like.'

There was silence. The mother rose as if with difficulty, and drew water in a tea-cup from the filter. When she resumed her place, her hands prepared to resume sewing. She looked up, solemnly, sternly.

'Dick, it's bad, bad news! I'm an old woman, and I must say what I think. It upsets me; it frightens me. I thought he might a' left you a hundred pounds.'

'Mother, don't talk about it till you've had time to think,' said Richard, stubbornly. 'If this is bad news, what the deuce would you call good? Just because I've been born and bred a mechanic, does that say I've got no common sense or self-respect? Are you afraid I shall go and drink myself to death? You talk like the people who make it their business to sneer at us—the improvidence of the working classes, and such d——d slander. It's good news for me, and it'll be good news for many another man. Wait and see.'

The mother became silent, keeping her lips tight, and struggling to regain her calmness. She was not convinced, but in argument with her eldest son she always gave way, affection and the pride she had in him aiding her instincts of discretion. In practice she still maintained something of maternal authority, often gaining her point by merely seeming offended. To the two who had not yet reached the year of emancipation she allowed, in essentials, no appeal from her decision. Between her and Richard there had been many a sharp conflict in former days, invariably ending with the lad's submission; the respect which his mother ex-

acted he in truth felt to be her due, and it was now long since they had openly been at issue on any point. Mrs. Mutimer's views were distinctly Conservative, and hitherto she had never taken Richard's Radicalism seriously; on the whole she had regarded it as a fairly harmless recreation for his leisure hours—decidedly preferable to a haunting of public-houses and music-halls. The loss of his employment caused her a good deal of uneasiness, but she had not ventured to do more than throw out hints of her disapproval; and now, as it seemed, the matter was of no moment. Henceforth she had far other apprehensions, but this first conflict of their views made her reticent.

'Just let me tell you how things stand,' Richard pursued, when his excitement had somewhat subsided; and he went on to explain the relations between old Mr. Mutimer and the Eldons, which in outline had been described to him by Mr. Yottle. And then—

'The will he had made left all the property to this young Eldon, who was to be trustee for a little money to be doled out to me yearly, just to save me from ruining myself, of course.' Richard's lips curled in scorn. 'I don't know whether the lawyer thought we ought to offer to give everything up; he seemed precious anxious to make me understand that the old man had never intended us to have it, and

that he *did* want these other people to have it. Of course, we've nothing to do with that. Luck's luck, and I think I know who'll make best use of it.'

'Why didn't you tell all this when Alice was here?' inquired his mother, seeming herself again, though very grave.

'I'll tell you. I thought it over, and it seems to me it'll be better if Alice and 'Arry wait a while before they know what'll come to them. They can't take anything till they're twenty-one. Alice is a good girl, but——'

He hesitated, having caught his mother's eye. He felt that this prudential course justified in a measure her anxiety.

'She's a girl,' he pursued, 'and we know that a girl with a lot o' money gets run after by men who care nothing about her and a good deal about the money. Then it's quite certain 'Arry won't be any the better for fancying himself rich. He's going to give us trouble as it is, I can see that. We shall have to take another house, of course, and we can't keep them from knowing that there's money fallen to me. But there's no need to talk about the figures, and if we can make them think it's only me that's better off, so much the better. Alice needn't go to work, and I'm glad of it; a girl's proper place is at home. You can tell her you want her to help in the new house. 'Arry had

better keep his place awhile. I shouldn't wonder if I find work for him myself before long. I've got plans, but I shan't talk about them just yet.'

He spoke then of the legal duties which fell upon him as next-of-kin, explaining the necessity of finding two sureties on taking out letters of administration. Mr. Yottle had offered himself for one; the other Richard hoped to find in Mr. Westlake, a leader of the Socialist movement.

'You want us to go into a big house?' asked Mrs. Mutimer. She seemed to pay little attention to the wider aspects of the change, but to fix on the details she could best understand, those which put her fears in palpable shape.

'I didn't say a big one, but a larger than this. We're not going to play the do-nothing gentlefolk; but all the same our life won't and can't be what it has been. There's no choice. You've worked hard all your life, mother, and it's only fair you should come in for a bit of rest. We'll find a house somewhere out Green Lanes way, or in Highbury or Holloway.'

He laughed again.

'So there's the best of it—the worst of it, as you say. Just take a night to turn it over. Most likely I shall go to Belwick again tomorrow afternoon.'

He paused, and his mother, after bending her head to bite off an end of cotton, asked—

'You'll tell Emma?'

'I shall go round to-night.'

A little later Richard left the house for this purpose. His step was firmer than ever, his head more upright. Walking along the crowded streets, he saw nothing; there was a fixed smile on his lips, the smile of a man to whom the world pays tribute. Never having suffered actual want, and blessed with sanguine temperament, he knew nothing of that fierce exultation, that wrathful triumph over fate, which comes to men of passionate mood smitten by the lightning-flash of unhoped prosperity. At present he was well-disposed to all men; even against capitalists and 'profitmongers' he could not have railed heartily. Capitalists? Was he not one himself? Aye, but he would prove himself such a one as you do not meet with every day; and the foresight of deeds which should draw the eyes of men upon him, which should shout his name abroad, softened his judgments with the charity of satisfied ambition. He would be the glorified representative of his class. He would show the world how a self-taught working man conceived the duties and privileges of wealth. He would shame those dunder-headed, callous-hearted aristocrats, those ravening bourgeois. Opportunity—what else

had he wanted? No longer would his voice be lost in petty lecture-halls, answered only by the applause of a handful of mechanics. Ere many months had passed, crowds should throng to hear him; his gospel would be trumpeted over the land. To what might he not attain? The educated, the refined, men and women——

He was at the entrance of a dark passage, where his feet stayed themselves by force of habit. He turned out of the street, and walked more slowly towards the house in which Emma Vine and her sisters lived. Having reached the door, he paused, but again took a few paces forward. Then he came back and rang the uppermost of five bells. In waiting, he looked vaguely up and down the street.

It was Emma herself who opened to him. The dim light showed a smile of pleasure and surprise.

'You've come to ask about Jane?' she said. 'She hasn't been quite so bad since last night.'

'I'm glad to hear it. Can I come up?'

'Will you?'

He entered, and Emma closed the door. It was pitch dark.

'I wish I'd brought a candle down,' Emma said, moving back along the passage. 'Mind, there's a pram at the foot of the stairs.'

The perambulator was avoided successfully by both, and they ascended the bare boards of the staircase. On each landing prevailed a distinct odour; first came the damp smell of newly-washed clothes, then the scent of fried onions, then the work-room of some small craftsman exhaled varnish. The topmost floor seemed the purest; it was only stuffy.

Richard entered an uncarpeted room which had to serve too many distinct purposes to allow of its being orderly in appearance. In one corner was a bed, where two little children lay asleep; before the window stood a sewing-machine, about which was heaped a quantity of linen; a table in the midst was half covered with a cloth, on which was placed a loaf and butter, the other half being piled with several dresses requiring the needle. Two black patches on the low ceiling showed in what positions the lamp stood by turns.

Emma's eldest sister was moving about the room. Hers were the children; her husband had been dead a year or more. She was about thirty years of age, and had a slatternly appearance; her face was peevish, and seemed to grudge the half-smile with which it received the visitor.

'You've no need to look round you,' she said. 'We're in a regular pig-stye, and likely to be. Where's there a chair?'

She shook some miscellaneous articles on to the floor to provide a seat.

'For mercy's sake don't speak too loud, and wake them children. Bertie's had the ear-ache; he's been crying all day. What with him and Jane, we've had a blessing, I can tell you. Can I put these supper things away, Emma?'

'I'll do it,' was the other's reply. 'Won't you have a bit more, Kate?'

'I've got no mind for eating. Well, you may cut a slice and put it on the mantelpiece. I'll go and sit with Jane.'

Richard sat and looked about the room absently. The circumstances of his own family had never fallen below the point at which it is possible to have regard for decency; the growing up of himself and of his brothers and sister had brought additional resources to meet extended needs, and the Mutimer characteristics had formed a safeguard against improvidence. He was never quite at his ease in this poverty-cumbered room, which he seldom visited.

'You ought to have a fire,' he said.

'There's one in the other room,' replied Kate. 'One has to serve us.'

'But you can't cook there.'

'Cook? We can boil a potato, and that's about all the cooking we can do now-a-days.'

She moved to the door as she spoke, and,

before leaving the room, took advantage of Richard's back being turned to make certain exhortatory signs to her sister. Emma averted her head.

Kate closed the door behind her. Emma, having removed the eatables to the cupboard, came near to Richard and placed her arm gently upon his shoulders. He looked at her kindly.

'Kate's been so put about with Bertie,' she said, in a tone of excuse. 'And she was up nearly all last night.'

'She never takes things like you do,' Richard remarked.

'She's got more to bear. There's the children always making her anxious. She took Alf to the hospital this afternoon, and the doctor says he must have—I forget the name, somebody's food. But it's two and ninepence for ever such a little tin. They don't think as his teeth'll ever come.'

'Oh, I dare say they will,' said Richard encouragingly.

He had put his arm about her. Emma knelt down by him, and rested her head against his shoulder.

'I'm tired,' she whispered. 'I've had to go twice to the Minories to-day. I'm so afraid I shan't be able to hold my eyes open with Jane, and Kate's tireder still.'

She did not speak as if seeking for sympathy; it was only the natural utterance of her thoughts in a moment of restful confidence. Uttermost weariness was a condition too familiar to the girl to be spoken of in any but a patient, matter-of-fact tone. But it was priceless soothing to let her forehead repose against the heart whose love was the one and sufficient blessing of her life. Her brown hair was very soft and fine; a lover of another kind would have pressed his lips upon it. Richard was thinking of matters more practical. At another time his indignation—in such a case right good and manful—would have boiled over at the thought of these poor women crushed in slavery to feed the world's dastard selfishness; this evening his mood was more complaisant, and he smiled as one at ease.

'Hadn't you better give up your work?' he said.

Emma raised her head. In the few moments of repose her eyelids had drooped with growing heaviness; she looked at him as if she had just been awakened to some great surprise.

'Give up work? How can I?'

'I think I would. You'd have more time to give to Jane, and you could sleep in the day. And Jane had better not begin again after this. Don't you think it would be better if you left

these lodgings and took a house, where there'd be plenty of room and fresh air?'

'Richard, what are you talking about?'

He laughed, quietly, on account of the sleeping children.

'How would you like,' he continued, 'to go and live in the country? Kate and Jane could have a house of their own, you know—in London, I mean, a house like ours; they could let a room or two if they chose. Then you and I could go where we liked. I was down in the Midland Counties yesterday; had to go on business; and I saw a house that would just suit us. It's a bit large; I dare say there's sixteen or twenty rooms. And there's trees growing all about it; a big garden——'

Emma dropped her head again and laughed, happy that Richard should jest with her so good-humouredly; for he did not often talk in the lighter way. She had read of such houses in the weekly story-papers. It must be nice to live in them; it must be nice to be a denizen of Paradise.

'I'm in earnest, Emma.'

His voice caused her to gaze at him again.

'Bring a chair,' he said, 'and I'll tell you something that'll—keep you awake.'

The insensible fellow! Her sweet, pale, wondering face was so close to his, the warmth

of her drooping frame was against his heart—and he bade her sit apart to listen.

She placed herself as he desired, sitting with her hands together in her lap, her countenance troubled a little, wishing to smile, yet not quite venturing. And he told his story, told it in all details, with figures that filled the mouth, that rolled forth like gold upon the bank-scales.

'This is mine,' he said, 'mine and yours.'

Have you seen a child listening to a long fairy tale, every page a new adventure of wizardry, a story of elf, or mermaid, or gnome, of treasures underground guarded by enchanted monsters, of bells heard silverly in the depth of old forests, of castles against the sunset, of lakes beneath the quiet moon? Know you how light gathers in the eyes dreaming on vision after vision, ever more intensely realised, yet ever of an unknown world? How, when at length the reader's voice is silent, the eyes still see, the ears still hear, until a movement breaks the spell, and with a deep, involuntary sigh the little one gazes here and there, wondering?

So Emma listened, and so she came back to consciousness, looking about the room, incredulous. Had she been overcome with weariness? Had she slept and dreamt?

One of the children stirred and uttered a little wailing sound. She stepped lightly to the

bedside, bent for a moment, saw that all was well again, and came back on tip-toe. The simple duty had quieted her throbbing heart. She seated herself as before.

'What about the country house now?' said Richard.

'I don't know what to say. It's more than I can take into my head.'

'You're not going to say, like mother did, that it was the worst piece of news she'd ever heard?'

'Your mother said that?'

Emma was startled. Had her thought passed lightly over some danger? She examined her mind rapidly.

'I suppose she said it,' Richard explained, 'just because she didn't know what else to say, that's about the truth. But there certainly is one thing I'm a little anxious about, myself. I don't care for either Alice or 'Arry to know the details of this windfall. They won't come in for their share till they're of age, and it's just as well they should think it's only a moderate little sum. So don't talk about it, Emma.'

The girl was still musing on Mrs. Mutimer's remark; she merely shook her head.

'You didn't think you were going to marry a man with his thousands and be a lady? Well, I shall have more to say in a day or two. But at present my idea is that mother and the rest

of them shall go into a larger house, and that you and Kate and Jane shall take our place. I don't know how long it'll be before those Eldon people can get out of Wanley Manor, but as soon as they do, why then there's nothing to prevent you and me going into it. Will that suit you, Em?'

'We shall really live in that big house?'

'Certainly we shall. I've got a life's work before me there, as far as I can see at present. The furniture belongs to Mrs. Eldon, I believe; we'll furnish the place to suit ourselves.'

'May I tell my sisters, Richard?'

'Just tell them that I've come in for some money and a house, perhaps that's enough. And look here, I'll leave you this five-pound note to go on with. You must get Jane whatever the doctor says. And throw all that sewing out of the windows; we'll have no more convict labour. Tell Jane to get well just as soon as it suits her.'

'But—all this money?'

'I've plenty. The lawyer advanced me some for present needs. Now it's getting late, I must go. I'll write and tell you when I shall be home again.'

He held out his hand, but the girl embraced him with the restrained tenderness which in her spoke so eloquently.

'Are you glad, Emma?' he asked.

'Very glad, for your sake.'

'And just a bit for your own, eh?'

'I never thought about money,' she answered. 'It was quite enough to be your wife.'

It was the simple truth.

CHAPTER VI.

At eleven o'clock the next morning Richard presented himself at the door of a house in Avenue Road, St. John's Wood, and expressed a desire to see Mr. Westlake. That gentleman was at home; he received the visitor in his study—a spacious room, luxuriously furnished, with a large window looking upon a lawn. The day was sunny and warm, but a clear fire equalised the temperature of the room. There was an odour of good tobacco, always most delightful when it blends with the scent of rich bindings.

It was Richard's first visit to this house. A few days ago he would, in spite of himself, have been somewhat awed by the man-servant at the door, the furniture of the hall, the air of refinement in the room he entered. At present he smiled on everything. Could he not command the same as soon as he chose?

Mr. Westlake rose from his writing-table and greeted his visitor with a hearty grip of

the hand. He was a man pleasant to look upon; his face, full of intellect, shone with the light of good-will, and the easy carelessness of his attire prepared one for the genial sincerity which marked his way of speaking. He wore a velvet jacket, a grey waistcoat buttoning up to the throat, grey trousers, fur-bordered slippers; his collar was very deep, and instead of the ordinary shirt-cuffs his wrists were enclosed in frills. Long-haired, full-bearded, he had the forehead of an idealist and eyes whose natural expression was an indulgent smile.

A man of letters, he had struggled from obscure poverty to success and ample means; at three-and-thirty he was still hard pressed to make both ends meet, but the ten subsequent years had built for him this pleasant home and banished his long familiar anxieties to the land of nightmare. 'It came just in time,' he was in the habit of saying to those who had his confidence. 'I was at the point where a man begins to turn sour, and I should have soured in earnest.' The process had been most effectually arrested. People were occasionally found to say that his books had a tang of acerbity; possibly this was the safety-valve at work, a hint of what might have come had the old hunger-demons kept up their goading. In the man himself you discovered an extreme simplicity of feeling, a frank tenderness, a noble

indignation. For one who knew him it was not difficult to understand that he should have taken up extreme social views, still less that he should act upon his convictions. All his writing foretold such a possibility, though on the other hand it exhibited devotion to forms of culture which do not as a rule predispose to democratic agitation. The explanation was perhaps too simple to be readily hit upon; the man was himself so supremely happy that with his dis position the thought of tyrannous injustice grew intolerable to him. Some incidents happened to set his wrath blazing, and henceforth, in spite of not a little popular ridicule and much shaking of the head among his friends, Mr. Westlake had his mission.

'I have come to ask your advice and help,' began Mutimer with directness. He was conscious of the necessity of subduing his voice, and had a certain pleasure in the ease with which he achieved this feat. It would not have been so easy a day or two ago.

'Ah, about this awkward affair of yours,' observed Mr. Westlake with reference to Richard's loss of his employment, of which, as editor of the Union's weekly paper, he had of course at once been apprised.

'No, not about that. Since then a very unexpected thing has happened to me.'

The story was once more related, vastly to

Mr. Westlake's satisfaction. Cheerful news concerning his friends always put him in the best of spirits.

He shook his head, laughing.

'Come, come, Mutimer, this'll never do! I'm not sure that we shall not have to consider your expulsion from the Union.'

Richard went on to mention the matters of legal routine in which he hoped Mr. Westlake would serve him. These having been settled—

'I wish to speak of something more important,' he said. 'You take it for granted, I hope, that I'm not going to make the ordinary use of this fortune. As yet I've only been able to hit on a few general ideas. I'm clear as to the objects I shall keep before me, but how best to serve them wants more reflection. I thought if I talked it over with you in the first place——'

The door opened, and a lady half entered the room.

'Oh, I thought you were alone,' she remarked to Mr. Westlake. 'Forgive me!'

'Come in! Here's our friend Mutimer. You know Mrs. Westlake?'

A few words had passed between this lady and Richard in the lecture-room a few weeks before. She was not frequently present at such meetings, but had chanced, on the occasion

referred to, to hear Mutimer deliver an harangue.

'You have no objection to talk of your plans? Join our council, will you?' he added to his wife. 'Our friend brings interesting news.'

Mrs. Westlake walked across the room to the curved window-seat. Her age could scarcely be more than three- or four-and-twenty; she was very dark, and her face grave almost to melancholy. Black hair, cut short at its thickest behind her neck, gave exquisite relief to features of the purest Greek type. In listening to anything that held her attention her eyes grew large, and their dark orbs seemed to dream passionately. The white swan's down at her throat—she was perfectly attired—made the skin above resemble rich-hued marble, and indeed to gaze at her long was to be impressed as by the sad loveliness of a supreme work of art. As Mutimer talked she leaned forward, her elbow on her knee, the back of her hand supporting her chin.

Her husband recounted what Richard had told him, and the latter proceeded to sketch the projects he had in view.

'My idea is,' he said, 'to make the mines at Wanley the basis of great industrial undertakings, just as any capitalist might, but to conduct these undertakings in a way consistent

with our views. I would begin by building furnaces, and in time add engineering works on a large scale. I would build houses for the men, and in fact make that valley an industrial settlement conducted on Socialist principles. Practically I can devote the whole of my income; my personal expenses will be not worth taking into account. The men must be paid on a just scheme, and the margin of profit that remains, all that we can spare from the extension of the works, shall be devoted to the Socialist propaganda. In fact, I should like to make the executive committee of the Union a sort of board of directors—and in a very different sense from the usual—for the Wanley estate. My personal expenditure deducted, I should like such a committee to have the practical control of funds. All this wealth was made by plunder of the labouring class, and I shall hold it as trustee for them. Do these ideas seem to you of a practical colour?'

Mr. Westlake nodded slowly twice. His wife kept her listening attitude unchanged; her eyes 'dreamed against a distant goal.'

'As I see the scheme,' pursued Richard, who spoke all along somewhat in the lecture-room tone, the result of a certain embarrassment, 'it will differ considerably from the Socialist experiments we know of. We shall be working not only to support ourselves, but

every bit as much set on profit as any capitalist in Belwick. The difference is, that the profit will benefit no individual, but the Cause. There'll be no attempt to carry out the idea of every man receiving the just outcome of his labour; not because I shouldn't be willing to share in that way, but simply because we have a greater end in view than to enrich ourselves. Our men must all be members of the Union, and their prime interest must be the advancement of the principles of the Union. We shall be able to establish new papers, to hire halls, and to spread ourselves over the country. It'll be fighting the capitalist manufacturers with their own weapons. I can see plenty of difficulties, of course. All England 'll be against us. Never mind, we'll defy them all, and we'll win. It'll be the work of my life, and we'll see if an honest purpose can't go as far as a thievish one.'

The climax would have brought crashing cheers at Commonwealth Hall; in Mr. Westlake's study it was received with well-bred expressions of approval.

'Well, Mutimer,' exclaimed the idealist, 'all this is intensely interesting, and right glorious for us. One sees at last a possibility of action. I ask nothing better than to be allowed to work with you. It happens very luckily that you are a practical engineer. I

suppose the mechanical details of the undertaking are entirely within your province?'

'Not quite, at present,' Mutimer admitted, 'but I shall have valuable help. Yesterday I had a meeting with a man named Rodman, a mining engineer, who has been working on the estate. He seems just the man I shall want; a Socialist already, and delighted to join in the plans I just hinted to him.'

'Capital! Do you propose, then, that we shall call a special meeting of the Committee? Or would you prefer to suggest a committee of your own?'

'No, I think our own committee will do very well, at all events for the present. The first thing, of course, is to get the financial details of our scheme put into shape. I go to Belwick again this afternoon; my solicitor must get his business through as soon as possible.'

'You will reside for the most part at Wanley?'

'At the Manor, yes. It is occupied just now, but I suppose will soon be free.'

'Do you know that part of the country, Stella?' Mr. Westlake asked of his wife.

She roused herself, drawing in her breath, and uttered a short negative.

'As soon as I get into the house,' Richard resumed to Mr. Westlake, 'I hope you'll come

and examine the place. It's unfortunate that the railway misses it by about three miles, but Rodman tells me we can easily run a private line to Agworth station. However, the first thing is to get our committee at work on the scheme.' Richard repeated this phrase with gusto. 'Perhaps you could bring it up at the Saturday meeting?'

'You'll be in town on Saturday?'

'Yes; I have a lecture in Islington on Sunday.'

'Saturday will do, then. Is this confidential?'

'Not at all. We may as well get as much encouragement out of it as we can. Don't you think so?'

'Certainly.'

Richard did not give expression to his thought that a paragraph on the subject in the Union's weekly organ, the 'Fiery Cross,' might be the best way of promoting such encouragement; but he delayed his departure for a few minutes with talk round about the question of the prudence which must necessarily be observed in publishing a project so undigested. Mr. Westlake, who was responsible for the paper, was not likely to transgress the limits of good taste, and when Richard, on Saturday morning, searched eagerly the columns of the 'Cross,' he was not altogether satisfied

with the extreme discretion which marked a brief paragraph among those headed: 'From Day to Day.' However, many of the readers were probably by that time able to supply the missing proper-name.

It was not the fault of Daniel Dabbs if members of the Hoxton and Islington branch of the Union read the paragraph without understanding to whom it referred. Daniel was among the first to hear of what had befallen the Mutimer family, and from the circle of his fellow-workmen the news spread quickly. Talk was rife on the subject of Mutimer's dismissal from Longwood Brothers', and the sensational rumour which followed so quickly found an atmosphere well prepared for its transmission. Hence the unusual concourse at the meeting-place in Islington next Sunday evening, where, as it became known to others besides Socialists, Mutimer was engaged to lecture. Richard experienced some vexation that his lecture was not to be at Commonwealth Hall, where the gathering would doubtless have been much larger.

The Union was not wealthy. The central hall was rented at Mr. Westlake's expense; two or three branches were managing with difficulty to support regular places of assembly, such as could not being obliged as yet to content themselves with open-air lecturing. In

Islington the leaguers met in a room behind a coffee-shop, ordinarily used for festive purposes; benches were laid across the floor, and an estrade at the upper end exalted chairman and lecturer. The walls were adorned with more or less striking advertisements of non-alcoholic beverages, and with a few prints from the illustrated papers. The atmosphere was tobaccoey, and the coffee-shop itself, through which the visitors had to make their way, suggested to the nostrils that bloaters are the working man's chosen delicacy at Sunday tea. A table just within the door of the lecture-room exposed for sale sundry Socialist publications, the latest issue of the 'Fiery Cross' in particular.

Richard was wont to be among the earliest arrivals; to-night he was full ten minutes behind the hour for which the lecture was advertised. A group of friends were standing about the table near the door; they received him with a bustle which turned all eyes thitherwards. He walked up the middle of the room to the platform. As soon as he was well in the eye of the meeting, a single pair of hands —Daniel Dabbs owned them—gave the signal for uproar; feet made play on the boarding, and one or two of the more enthusiastic revolutionists fairly gave tongue. Richard seated himself with grave countenance, and surveyed

the assembly; from fifty to sixty people were present, among them three or four women, and the number continued to grow. The chairman and one or two leading spirits had followed Mutimer to the place of distinction, where they talked with him.

Punctuality was not much regarded at these meetings; the lecture was announced for eight, but rarely began before half-past. The present being an occasion of exceptional interest, twenty minutes past the hour saw the chairman rise for his prefatory remarks. He was a lank man of jovial countenance and jerky enunciation. There was no need, he observed, to introduce a friend and comrade so well known to them as the lecturer of the evening. 'We're always glad to hear him, and to-night, if I may be allowed to 'int as much, we're *particularly* glad to hear him. Our friend and comrade is going to talk to us about the Land. It's a question we can't talk or think too much about, and Comrade Mutimer has thought about it as much and more than any of us, I think I may say. I don't know,' the chairman added, with a sly look across the room, 'whether our friend's got any new views on this subject of late. I shouldn't wonder if he had.' Here sounded a roar of laughter, led off by Daniel Dabbs. 'Hows'ever, be that as it may, we can answer for it as any views he may

hold is the right views, and the honest views, and the views of a man as means to do a good deal more than talk about his convictions!'

Again did the stentor-note of Daniel ring forth, and it was amid thunderous cheering that Richard left his chair and moved to the front of the platform. His Sunday suit of black was still that with which his friends were familiar, but his manner, though the audience probably did not perceive the detail, was unmistakably changed. He had been wont to begin his address with short, stinging periods, with sneers and such bitterness of irony as came within his compass. To-night he struck quite another key, mellow, confident, hinting at personal satisfaction; a smile was on his lips, and not a smile of scorn. He rested one hand against his side, holding in the other a scrap of paper with jotted items of reasoning. His head was thrown a little back; he viewed the benches from beneath his eyelids. True, the pose maintained itself but for a moment. I mention it because it was something new in Richard.

He spoke of the land; he attacked the old monopoly, and visioned a time when a claim to individual ownerships of the earth's surface would be as ludicrous as were now the assertion of title to a fee-simple somewhere in the moon. He mustered statistics; he adduced historic

and contemporary example of the just and the unjust in land-holding; he gripped the throat of a certain English duke, and held him up for flagellation; he drifted into oceans of economic theory; he sat down by the waters of Babylon; he climbed Pisgah. Had he but spoken of backslidings in the wilderness! But for that fatal omission, the lecture was, of its kind, good. By degrees Richard forgot his pose and the carefully struck note of mellowness; he began to believe what he was saying, and to say it with the right vigour of popular oratory. Forget his struggles with the h-fiend; forget his syntactical lapses; you saw that after all the man had within him a clear flame of conscience; that he had felt before speaking that speech was one of the uses for which Nature had expressly framed him. His invective seldom degenerated into vulgar abuse; one discerned in him at least the elements of what we call good taste; of simple manliness he disclosed not a little; he had some command of pathos. In conclusion, he finished without reference to his personal concerns.

The chairman invited questions, preliminary to debate.

He rose half-way down the room,—the man who invariably rises on these occasions. He was oldish, with bent shoulders, and wore spectacles—probably a clerk of forty years'

standing. In his hand was a small note-book, which he consulted. He began with measured utterance, emphatic, loud.

'I wish to propose to the lecturer seven questions. I will read them in order; I have taken some pains to word them clearly.'

Richard has his scrap of paper on his knee. He jots a word or two after each deliberate interrogation, smiling.

Other questioners succeeded. Richard replies to them. He fails to satisfy the man of seven queries, who, after repeating this and the other of the seven, professes himself still unsatisfied, shakes his head indulgently, walks from the room.

The debate is opened. Behold a second inevitable man; he is not well-washed, his shirt-front shows a beer-stain; he is angry before he begins.

'I don't know whether a man as doesn't 'old with these kind o' theories 'll be allowed a fair 'earin——'

Indignant interruption. Cries of 'Of course he will!'—'Who ever refused to hear you?' —and the like.

He is that singular phenomenon, that self-contradiction, that expression insoluble into factors of common-sense—the Conservative working man. What do they want to be at? he demands. Do they suppose as this kind of

talk 'll make wages higher, or enable the poor man to get his beef and beer at a lower rate? What's the d——d good of it all? Figures, eh? He never heered yet as figures made a meal for a man as hadn't got one; nor yet as they provided shoes and stockings for his young 'uns at 'ome. It made him mad to listen, that it did! Do they suppose as the rich men 'll give up the land, if they talk till all's blue? Wasn't it human natur to get all you can and stick to it?

'Pig's nature!' cries someone from the front benches.

'There!' comes the rejoinder. 'Didn't I say as there was no fair 'earing for a man as didn't say just what suits you?'

The voice of Daniel Dabbs is loud in good-tempered mockery. Mockery comes from every side, an angry note here and there, for the most part tolerant, jovial.

'Let him speak! 'Ear him! Hoy! Hoy!'

The chairman interposes, but by the time that order is restored the Conservative working man has thrust his hat upon his head and is off to the nearest public-house, muttering oaths.

Mr. Cullen rises, at the same time rises Mr. Cowes. These two gentlemen are fated to rise simultaneously. They scowl at each other. Mr. Cullen begins to speak, and Mr. Cowes,

after a circular glance of protest, resumes his seat. The echoes tell that we are in for oratory with a vengeance. Mr. Cullen is a short, stout man, very seedily habited, with a great rough head of hair, an aquiline nose, lungs of vast power. His vein is King Cambyses'; he tears passion to tatters; he roars leonine; he is your man to have at the pamper'd jades of Asia! He has got hold of a new word, and that the verb to 'exploit.' I am exploited, thou art exploited,—*he* exploits! Who? Why, such men as that English duke whom the lecturer gripped and flagellated. The English duke is Mr. Cullen's bugbear; never a speech from Mr. Cullen but that duke is most horribly mauled. His ground-rents,—yah! Another word of which Mr. Cullen is fond is 'strattum,'—usually spelt and pronounced with but one t midway. You and I have the misfortune to belong to a social 'strattum' which is trampled flat and hard beneath the feet of the land-owners. Mr. Cullen rises to such a point of fury that one dreads the consequences—to himself. Already the chairman is on his feet, intimating in dumb show that the allowed ten minutes have elapsed; there is no making the orator hear. At length his friend who sits by him fairly grips his coat-tails and brings him to a sitting posture, amid mirthful tumult. Mr. Cullen joins in the mirth,

looks as though he had never been angry in his life. And till next Sunday comes round he will neither speak nor think of the social question.

Mr. Cowes is unopposed. After the preceding enthusiast, the voice of Mr. Cowes falls soothingly as a stream among the heather. He is tall, meagre, bald; he wears a very broad black necktie, his hand saws up and down. Mr. Cowes' tone is the quietly venomous; in a few minutes you believe in his indignation far more than in that of Mr. Cullen. He makes a point, and pauses to observe the effect upon his hearers. He prides himself upon his grammar, goes back to correct a concord, emphasises eccentricities of pronunciation; for instance, he accents 'capitalist' on the second syllable, and repeats the words with grave challenge to all and sundry. Speaking of something which he wishes to stigmatise as a misnomer, he exclaims: It's what I call a misnomy!' And he follows the assertion with an awful suspense of utterance. He brings his speech to a close exactly with the end of the tenth minute, and, on sitting down, eyes his unknown neighbour with wrathful intensity for several moments.

Who will follow? A sound comes from the very back of the room, such a sound that every head turns in astonished search for the source of it. Such voice has the wind in garret-chimneys on a winter night. It is a thin

wail, a prelude of lamentation; it troubles the blood. The speaker no one seems to know; he is a man of yellow visage, with head sunk between pointed shoulders, on his crown a mere scalp-lock. He seems to be afflicted with a disease of the muscles; his malformed body quivers, the hand he raises shakes paralytic. His clothes are of the meanest; what his age may be it is impossible to judge. As his voice gathers strength, the hearers begin to feel the influence of a terrible earnestness. He does not rant, he does not weigh his phrases; the stream of bitter prophecy flows on smooth and dark. He is supplying the omission in Mutimer's harangue, is bidding his class know itself and chasten itself, as an indispensable preliminary to any great change in the order of things. He cries vanity upon all these detailed schemes of social reconstruction. Are we ready for it? he wails. Could we bear it, if they granted it to us? It is all good and right, but hadn't we better first make ourselves worthy of such freedom? He begins a terrible arraignment of the People,—then, of a sudden, his voice has ceased. You could hear a pin drop. It is seen that the man has fallen to the ground; there arises a low moaning; people press about him.

They carry him into the coffee-shop. It was a fit. In five minutes he is restored, but does not come back to finish his speech.

There is an interval of disorder. But surely we are not going to let the meeting end in this way. The chairman calls for the next speaker, and he stands forth in the person of a rather smug little shopkeeper, who declares that he knows of no single particular in which the working class needs correction. The speech undeniably falls flat. Will no one restore the tone of the meeting?

Mr. Kitshaw is the man! Now we shall have broad grins. Mr. Kitshaw enjoys a reputation for mimicry; he takes off music-hall singers in the bar-parlour of a Saturday night. Observe, he rises, hems, pulls down his waistcoat; there is bubbling laughter. Mr. Kitshaw brings back the debate to its original subject; he talks of the Land. He is a little haphazard at first, but presently hits the mark in a fancy picture of a country still in the hands of aborigines, as yet unannexed by the capitalist nations, knowing not the meaning of the verb 'exploit.'

'Imagine such a happy land, my friends; a land, I say, which nobody hasn't ever thought of "developing the resources" of,—that's the proper phrase, I believe. There are the people, with clothing enough for comfort and—ahem! —good manners, but, mark you, no more. No manufacture of luxurious skirts and hulsters and togs o' that kind by the exploited classes. No, for no exploited classes don't exist! All are

equal, my friends. Up an' down the fields they goes, all day long, arm-in-arm, Jack and Jerry, aye, and Liza an' Sairey Ann; for they have equality of the sexes, mind you! Up an' down the fields, I say, in a devil-may-care sort of way, with their sweethearts and their wives. No factory smoke, O dear no! There's the rivers, with tropical plants a-shading the banks, O my! There they goes up an' down in their boats, devil-may-care, a-strumming on the banjo,'—he imitated such action,—' and a singing their nigger minstrelsy with light 'earts. Why? 'Cause they ain't got no work to get up to at 'arf-past five next morning. Their time's their own! *That's* the condition of an unexploited country, my friends!'

Mr. Kitshaw had put everyone in vast good humour. You might wonder that his sweetly idyllic picture did not stir bitterness by contrast; it were to credit the English workman with too much imagination. Resonance of applause rewarded the sparkling rhetorician. A few of the audience availed themselves of the noise to withdraw, for the clock showed that it was close upon ten, and public-houses shut their doors early on Sunday.

But Richard Mutimer was on his feet again, and this time without regard to effect; there was a word in him strongly demanding utterance. It was to the speech of the unfortunate

prophet that he desired to reply. He began with sorrowful admissions. No one speaking honestly could deny that—that the working class had its faults; they came out plainly enough now and then. Drink, for instance (Mr. Cullen gave a resounding 'Hear, hear!' and a stamp on the boards). What sort of a spectacle would be exhibited by the public-houses in Hoxton and Islington at closing time to-night? ('True!' from Mr. Cowes, who also stamped on the boards.) Yes, but—— Richard used the device of apcsiopesis; Daniel Dabbs took it for a humorous effect and began a roar, which was summarily interdicted. 'But,' pursued Richard with emphasis, 'what is the meaning of these vices? What do they come of? Who's to blame for them? Not the working class—never tell me! What drives a man to drink in his spare hours? What about the poisonous air of garrets and cellars? What about excessive toil and inability to procure healthy recreation? What about defects of education, due to poverty? What about diseased bodies inherited from over-slaved parents?' Messrs. Cowes and Cullen had accompanied these queries with a climax of vociferous approval; when Richard paused, they led the tumult of hands and heels. 'Look at that poor man who spoke to us!' cried Mutimer. 'He's gone, so I shan't hurt him by

speaking plainly. He spoke well, mind you, and he spoke from his heart; but what sort of a life has his been, do you think? A wretched cripple, a miserable weakling no doubt from the day of his birth, cursed in having ever seen the daylight, and, such as he is, called upon to fight for his bread. Much of it he gets! Who would blame that man if he drank himself into unconsciousness every time he picked up a sixpence?' Cowes and Cullen bellowed their delight. 'Well, he doesn't do it; so much you can be sure of. In some vile hole here in this great city of ours he drags on a life worse—aye, a thousand times worse!—than that of the horses in the West-end mews. Don't clap your hands so much, fellow-workers. Just think about it on your way home; talk about it to your wives and your children. It's the sight of objects like that that makes my blood boil, and that's set me in earnest at this work of ours. I feel for that man and all like him as if they were my brothers. And I take you all to witness, all you present and all you repeat my words to, that I'll work on as long as I have life in me, that I'll use every opportunity that's given me to uphold the cause of the poor and down-trodden against the rich and selfish and luxurious, that if I live another fifty years I shall still be of the people and with the people, that no man shall ever have it in his power to

say that Richard Mutimer misused his chances and was only a new burden to them whose load he might have lightened!'

There was nothing for it but to leap on to the very benches and yell as long as your voice would hold out.

After that the meeting was mere exuberance of mutual congratulations. Mr. Cullen was understood to be moving the usual vote of thanks, but even his vocal organs strove hard for little purpose. Daniel Dabbs had never made a speech in his life, but excitement drove him on the honourable post of seconder. The chairman endeavoured to make certain announcements; then the assembly broke up. The estrade was invaded; everybody wished to shake hands with Mutimer. Mr. Cullen tried to obtain Richard's attention to certain remarks of value; failing, he went off with a scowl. Mr. Cowes attempted to button-hole the popular hero; finding Richard conversing with someone else at the same time, he turned away with a covert sneer. The former of the two worthies had desired to insist upon every member of the Union becoming a teetotaller; the latter wished to say that he thought it would be well if a badge of temperance were henceforth worn by Unionists. On turning away, each glanced at the clock and hurried his step.

In a certain dark street not very far from

the lecture-room Mr. Cullen rose on tip-toe at the windows of a dull little public-house. A Unionist was standing at the bar; Mr. Cullen hurried on, into a street yet darker. Again he tip-toed at a window. The glimpse reassured him; he passed quickly through the doorway, stepped to the bar, gave an order. Then he turned, and behold, on a seat just under the window sat Mr. Cowes, a short pipe in his mouth, a smoking tumbler held on his knee. The supporters of total abstinence nodded to each other, with a slight lack of spontaneity. Mr. Cullen, having secured his own tumbler, came by his comrade's side.

'Deal o' fine talk to wind up with,' he remarked tentatively.

'He means what he says,' returned the other gravely.

'Oh yes,' Mr. Cullen hastened to admit. 'Mutimer means what he says! Only the way of saying it, I meant.—I've got a bit of a sore throat.'

'So have I. After that there hot room.'

They nodded at each other sympathetically. Mr. Cullen filled a little black pipe.

'Got a light?'

Mr. Cowes offered the glowing bowl of his own clay; they put their noses together and blew a cloud.

'Of course there's no saying what time 'll

do,' observed tall Mr. Cowes, sententiously, after a gulp of warm liquor.

'No more there is,' assented short Mr. Cullen with half a wink.

'It's easy to promise.'

'As easy as tellin' lies.'

Another silence.

'Don't suppose you and me 'll get much of it,' Mr. Cowes ventured to observe.

'About as much as you can put in your eye without winkin',' was the other's picturesque agreement.

They talked till closing time.

CHAPTER VII.

One morning late in June, Hubert Eldon passed through the gates of Wanley Manor and walked towards the village. It was the first time since his illness that he had left the grounds on foot. He was very thin, and had an absent, troubled look; the natural cheerfulness of youth's convalescence seemed altogether lacking in him.

From a rising point of the road, winding between the manor and Wanley, a good view of the valley offered itself; here Hubert paused, leaning a little on his stick, and let his eyes dwell upon the prospect. A year ago he had stood here and enjoyed the sweep of meadows between Stanbury Hill and the wooded slope opposite, the orchard-patches, the flocks along the margin of the little river. To-day he viewed a very different scene. Building of various kinds was in progress in the heart of the vale; a great massive chimney was rising to completion, and about it stood a number of

sheds. Beyond was to be seen the commencement of a street of small houses, promising infinite ugliness in a little space; the soil over a considerable area was torn up and trodden into mud. A number of men were at work; carts and waggons and trucks were moving about. In truth, the benighted valley was waking up and donning the true nineteenth-century livery.

The young man's face, hitherto thoughtfully sad, changed to an expression of bitterness; he muttered what seemed to be angry and contemptuous words, then averted his eyes and walked on. He entered the village street and passed along it for some distance, his fixed gaze appearing studiously to avoid the people who stood about or walked by him. There was a spot of warm colour on his cheeks; he held himself very upright and had a painfully self-conscious air.

He stopped before a dwelling-house, rang the bell, and made inquiry whether Mr. Mutimer was at home. The reply being affirmative, he followed the servant up to the first floor. His name was announced at the door of a sitting-room, and he entered.

Two men were conversing in the room. One sat at the table with a sheet of paper before him, sketching a rough diagram and scribbling notes; this was Richard Mutimer.

He was dresssed in a light tweed suit; his fair moustache and beard were trimmed, and the hand which rested on the table was no longer that of a daily-grimed mechanic. His linen was admirably starched; altogether he had a very fresh and cool appearance. His companion was astride on a chair, his arms resting on the back, a pipe in his mouth. This man was somewhat older than Mutimer; his countenance indicated shrewdness and knowledge of the world. He was dark and well-featured, his glossy black hair was parted in the middle, his moustache of the cut called imperial, his beard short and peaked. He wore a canvas jacket, a white waistcoat and knickerbockers; at his throat a blue necktie fluttered loose. When Hubert's name was announced by the servant, this gentleman stopped midway in a sentence, took his pipe from his lips, and looked to the door with curiosity.

Mutimer rose and addressed his visitor easily indeed, but not discourteously.

'How do you do, Mr. Eldon? I'm glad to see that you are so much better. Will you sit down? I think you know Mr. Rodman, at all events by name?'

Hubert assented by gesture. He had come prepared for disagreeable things in this his first meeting with Mutimer, but the honour of an introduction to the latter's friends had

not been included in his anticipations. Mr. Rodman had risen and bowed slightly. His smile carried a disagreeable suggestion from which Mutimer's behaviour was altogether free; he rather seemed to enjoy the situation.

For a moment there was silence and embarrassment. Richard overcame the difficulty.

'Come and dine with me to-night, will you?' he said to Rodman. 'Here, take this plan with you, and think it over.'

'Pray don't let me interfere with your business,' interposed Hubert, with scrupulous politeness. 'I could see you later, Mr. Mutimer.'

'No, no; Rodman and I have done for the present,' said Mutimer, cheerfully. 'By-the-by,' he added, as his right-hand man moved to the door, 'don't forget to drop a line to Slater and Smith. And, I say, if Hogg turns up before two o'clock, send him here; I'll be down with you by half-past.'

Mr. Rodman gave an 'All right,' nodded to Hubert, who paid no attention, and took his departure.

'You've had a long pull of it,' Richard began, as he took his chair again, and threw his legs into an easy position. 'Shall I close the windows? Maybe you don't like the draught.'

'Thank you; I feel no draught.'

The working man had the advantage as yet. Hubert in vain tried to be at ease, whilst

Mutimer was quite himself, and not ungraceful in his assumption of equality. For one thing, Hubert could not avoid a comparison between his own wasted frame and the other's splendid physique; it heightened the feeling of antagonism which possessed him in advance, and provoked the haughtiness he had resolved to guard against. The very lineaments of the men foretold mutual antipathy. Hubert's extreme delicacy of feature was the outward expression of a character so compact of subtleties and refinements, of high prejudice and jealous sensibility, of spiritual egoism and all-pervading fastidiousness, that it was impossible for him not to regard with repugnance a man who represented the combative principle, even the triumph, of the uncultured classes. He was no hide-bound aristocrat; the liberal tendencies of his intellect led him to scorn the pageantry of long-descended fools as strongly as he did the blind image-breaking of the mob; but in a case of personal relations temperament carried it over judgment in a very high-handed way. Youth and disappointment weighed in the scale of unreason. Mutimer, on the other hand, though fortune helped him to forbearance, saw, or believed he saw, the very essence of all he most hated in this proud-eyed representative of a county family. His own rough-sculptured comeliness corresponded to the vigour and

practicality and zeal of a nature which cared nothing for form and all for substance; the essentials of life were to him the only things in life, instead of, as to Hubert Eldon, the mere brute foundation of an artistic superstructure. Richard read clearly enough the sentiments with which his visitor approached him; who that is the object of contempt does not readily perceive it? His way of revenging himself was to emphasise a tone of good-fellowship, to make it evident how well he could afford to neglect privileged insolence. In his heart he triumphed over the disinherited aristocrat; outwardly he was civil, even friendly.

Hubert had made this call with a special purpose.

'I am charged by Mrs. Eldon,' he began, 'to thank you for the courtesy you have shown her during my illness. My own thanks likewise I hope you will accept. We have caused you, I fear, much inconvenience.'

Richard found himself envying the form and tone of this deliverance; he gathered his beard in his hands and gave it a tug.

'Not a bit of it,' he replied. 'I am very comfortable here. A bedroom and a place for work, that's about all I want.'

Hubert barely smiled. He wondered whether the mention of work was meant to suggest comparisons. He hastened to add—

'On Monday we hope to leave the Manor.'

'No need whatever for hurry,' observed Mutimer, good-humouredly. 'Please tell Mrs. Eldon that I hope she will take her own time.' On reflection this seemed rather an ill-chosen phrase; he bettered it. 'I should be very sorry if she inconvenienced herself on my account.'

'Confound the fellow's impudence!' was Hubert's mental comment. 'He plays the forbearing landlord.'

His spoken reply was: 'It is very kind of you. I foresee no difficulty in completing the removal on Monday.'

In view of Mutimer's self-command, Hubert began to be aware that his own constraint might carry the air of petty resentment. Fear of that drove him upon a topic he would rather have left alone.

'You are changing the appearance of the valley,' he said, veiling by his tone the irony which was evident in his choice of words.

Richard glanced at him, then walked to the window, with his hands in his pockets, and gave himself the pleasure of a glimpse of the furnace-chimney above the opposite houses. He laughed.

'I hope to change it a good deal more. In a year or two you won't know the place.'

'I fear not.'

Mutimer glanced again at his visitor.

'Why do you fear?' he asked, with less command of his voice.

'I of course understand your point of view. Personally, I prefer nature.'

Hubert endeavoured to smile, that his personal preferences might lose something of their edge.

'You prefer nature,' Mutimer repeated, coming back to his chair, on the seat of which he rested a foot. 'Well, I can't say that I do. The Wanley Iron Works will soon mean bread to several hundred families; how many would the grass support?'

'To be sure,' assented Hubert, still smiling.

'You are aware,' Mutimer proceeded to ask, 'that this is not a speculation for my own profit?'

'I have heard something of your scheme. I trust it will be appreciated.'

'I dare say it will be—by those who care anything about the welfare of the people.'

Eldon rose; he could not trust himself to continue the dialogue. He had expected to meet a man of coarser grain; Mutimer's intelligence made impossible the civil condescension which would have served with a boor, and Hubert found the temptation to pointed utterance all the stronger for the dangers it involved.

'I will drop you a note,' he said, 'to let you know as soon as the house is empty.'

'Thank you.'

They had not shaken hands at meeting, nor did they now. Each felt relieved when out of the other's sight.

Hubert turned out of the street into a road which would lead him to the church, whence there was a field-path back to the Manor. Walking with his eyes on the ground he did not perceive the tall, dark figure that approached him as he drew near to the churchyard gate. Mr. Wyvern had been conducting a burial; he had just left the vestry and was on his way to the vicarage, which stood five minutes' walk from the church. Himself unperceived, he scrutinised the young man until he stood face to face with him; his deep-voiced greeting caused Hubert to look up with a start.

'I'm very glad to see you walking,' said the clergyman.

He took Hubert's hand and held it paternally in both his own. Eldon seemed affected with a sudden surprise; as he met the large gaze his look showed embarrassment.

'You remember me?' Mr. Wyvern remarked, his wonted solemnity lightened by the gleam of a brief smile. Looking closely into his face was like examining a map in relief;

you saw heights and plains, the intersection of multitudinous valleys, river-courses with their tributaries. It was the visage of a man of thought and character. His eyes spoke of late hours and the lamp; beneath each was a heavy pocket of skin, wrinkling at its juncture with the cheek. His teeth were those of an incessant smoker, and, in truth, you could seldom come near him without detecting the odour of tobacco. Despite the amplitude of his proportions, there was nothing ponderous about him; the great head was finely formed, and his limbs must at one time have been as graceful as they were muscular.

'Is this accident,' Hubert asked; 'or did you know me at the time?'

'Accident, pure accident. Will you walk to the vicarage with me?'

They paced side by side.

'Mrs. Eldon profits by the pleasant weather, I trust?' the vicar observed, with grave courtesy.

'Thank you, I think she does. I shall be glad when she is settled in her new home.'

They approached the door of the vicarage in silence. Entering, Mr. Wyvern led the way to his study. When he had taken a seat, he appeared to forget himself for a moment, and played with the end of his beard.

Hubert showed impatient curiosity.

'You found me there by chance that morning?' he began.

The clergyman returned to the present. His elbows on either arm of his round chair, he sat leaning forward, thoughtfully gazing at his companion.

'By chance,' he replied. 'I sleep badly; so it happened that I was abroad shortly after daybreak. I was near the edge of the wood when I heard a pistol-shot. I waited for the second.'

'We fired together,' Hubert remarked.

'Ah! It seemed to me one report. Well, as I stood listening, there came out from among the trees a man who seemed in a hurry. He was startled at finding himself face to face with me, but didn't stop; he said something rapidly in French that I failed to catch, pointed back into the wood, and hastened off.'

'We had no witnesses,' put in Hubert; 'and both aimed our best. I wonder he sent you to look for me.'

'A momentary weakness, no doubt,' rejoined the vicar drily. 'I made my way among the trees and found you lying there, unconscious. I made some attempt to stop the blood-flow, then picked you up; it seemed better, on the whole, than leaving you on the wet grass an indefinite time. Your overcoat was on the ground; as I took hold of it, two

letters fell from the pocket. I made no scruple about reading the addresses, and was astonished to find that one was to Mrs. Eldon, at Wanley Manor, Wanley being the place where I was about to live on my return to England. I took it for granted that you were Mrs. Eldon's son. The other letter, as you know, was to a lady at a hotel in the town.'

Hubert nodded.

'And you went to her as soon as you left me?'

'After hearing from the doctor that there was no immediate danger.—The letters, I suppose, would have announced your death?'

Hubert again inclined his head. The imperturbable gravity of the speaker had the effect of imposing self-command on the young man, whose sensitive cheeks showed what was going on within.

'Will you tell me of your interview with her?' he asked.

'It was of the briefest; my French is not fluent.'

'But she speaks English well.'

'Probably her distress led her to give preference to her native tongue. She was anxious to go to you immediately, and I told her where you lay. I made inquiries next day, and found that she was still giving you her care. As you were doing well, and I had to

be moving homewards, I thought it better to leave without seeing you again. The innkeeper had directions to telegraph to me if there was a change for the worse.'

'My pocket-book saved me,' remarked Hubert, touching his side.

Mr. Wyvern drew in his lips.

'Came between that ready-stamped letter and Wanley Manor,' was his comment.

There was a brief silence.

'You allow me a question?' the vicar resumed. 'It is with reference to the French lady.'

'I think you have every right to question me.'

'Oh no! It does not concern the events prior to your—accident.' Mr. Wyvern savoured the word. 'How long did she remain in attendance upon you?'

'A short time—two days—I did not need——'

Mr. Wyvern motioned with his hand, kindly.

'Then I was not mistaken,' he said, averting his eyes for the first time, 'in thinking that I saw her in Paris.'

'In Paris?' Hubert repeated, with a poor affectation of indifference.

'I made a short stay before crossing. I had business at a bank one day; as I stood

before the counter a gentleman entered and took a place beside me. A second look assured me that he was the man who met me at the edge of the wood that morning. I suppose he remembered me, for he looked away and moved from me. I left the bank, and found an open carriage waiting at the door. In it sat the lady of whom we speak. I took a turn along the pavement and back again. The Frenchman entered the carriage; they drove away.'

Hubert's eyes were veiled; he breathed through his nostrils. Again there was silence.

'Mr. Eldon,' resumed the vicar, 'I was a man of the world before I became a churchman; you will notice that I affect no professional tone in speaking with you, and it is because I know that anything of the kind would only alienate you. It appeared to me that chance had made me aware of something it might concern you to hear. I know nothing of the circumstances of the case, merely offer you the facts.'

'I thank you,' was Hubert's reply in an undertone.

'It impressed me, that letter ready stamped for Wanley Manor. I thought of it again after the meeting in Paris.'

'I understand you. Of course I could explain the necessity. It would be useless.'

'Quite. But experience is not, or should

not be, useless, especially when commented on by one who has very much of it behind him.'

Hubert stood up. His mind was in a feverishly active state, seeming to follow several lines of thought simultaneously. Among other things, he was wondering how it was that throughout this conversation he had been so entirely passive. He had never found himself under the influence of so strong a personality, exerted too in such a strangely quiet way.

'What are your plans—your own plans?' Mr. Wyvern inquired.

'I have none.'

'Forgive me;—there will be no material difficulties?'

'None; I have four hundred a year.'

'You have not graduated yet, I believe?'

'No. But I hardly think I can go back to school.'

'Perhaps not. Well, turn things over. I should like to hear from you.'

'You shall.'

Hubert continued his walk to the Manor. Before the entrance stood two large furniture-vans; the doorway was littered with materials of packing, and the hall was full of objects in disorder. Footsteps made a hollow resonance in all parts of the house, for everywhere the long wonted conditions of sound were disturbed. The library was already dismantled; here he

could close the door and walk about without fear of intrusion. He would have preferred to remain in the open air, but a summer shower had just begun as he reached the house. He could not sit still; the bare floor of the large room met his needs.

His mind's eye pictured a face which a few months ago had power to lead him whither it willed, which had in fact led him through strange scenes, as far from the beaten road of a college curriculum as well could be. It was a face of foreign type, Jewish possibly, most unlike that ideal of womanly charm kept in view by one who seeks peace and the heart's home. Hubert had entertained no thought of either. The romance which most young men are content to enjoy in printed pages he had acted out in his life. He had lived through a glorious madness, as unlike the vulgar oat-sowing of the average young man of wealth as the latest valse on a street-organ is unlike a passionate dream of Chopin. However unworthy the object of his frenzy—and perhaps one were as worthy as another—the pursuit had borne him through an atmosphere of fire, tempering him for life, marking him for ever from plodders of the dusty highway. A reckless passion is a patent of nobility. Whatever existence had in store for him henceforth, Hubert could feel that he had lived.

An hour's communing with memory was

brought to an end by the ringing of the luncheon-bell. Since his illness Hubert had taken meals with his mother in her own sitting-room. Thither he now repaired.

Mrs. Eldon had grown older in appearance since that evening of her son's return. Of course she had discovered the cause of his illness, and the incessant torment of a great fear had been added to what she suffered from the estrangement between the boy and herself. Her own bodily weakness had not permitted her to nurse him; she had passed days and nights in anguish of expectancy. At one time it had been life or death. If he died, what life would be hers through the brief delay to which she could look forward?

Once more she had him by her side, but the moral distance between them was nothing lessened: Mrs. Eldon's pride would not allow her to resume the conversation which had ended so hopelessly for her, and she interpreted Hubert's silence in the saddest sense. Now they were about to be parted again. A house had been taken for her at Agworth, three miles away; in her state of health she could not quit the neighbourhood of the few old friends whom she still saw. But Hubert would necessarily go into the world to seek some kind of career. No hope shone for her in the prospect.

Whilst the servant waited on them at

luncheon, mother and son exchanged few words. Afterwards, Mrs. Eldon had her chair moved to the window, where she could see the garden greenery.

'I called on Mr. Mutimer,' Hubert said, standing near her. Through the meal he had cast frequent glances at her pale, nobly-lined countenance, as if something had led him to occupy his thoughts with her. He looked at her in the same way now.

'Did you? How did he impress you?'

'He is not quite the man I had expected; more civilised. I should suppose he is the better kind of artisan. He talks with a good deal of the working-class accent, of course, but not like a wholly uneducated man.'

'His letter, you remember, was anything but illiterate. I feel I ought to ask him to come and see me before we leave.'

'The correspondence surely suffices.'

'You expressed my thanks?'

'Conscientiously.'

'I see you found the interview rather difficult, Hubert.'

'How could it be otherwise? The man is well enough, of his kind, but the kind is detestable.'

'Did he try to convert you to Socialism?' asked his mother, smiling in her sad way.

'I imagine he discerned the hopelessness

of such an undertaking. We had a little passage of arms,—quite within the bounds of civility. Shall I tell you how I felt in talking with him? I seemed to be holding a dialogue with the twentieth century, and you may think what that means.'

'Ah, it's a long way off, Hubert.'

'I wish it were farther. The man was openly exultant; he stood for Demos grasping the sceptre. I am glad, mother, that you leave Wanley before the air is poisoned.'

'Mr. Mutimer does not see that side of the question?'

'Not he! Do you imagine the twentieth century will leave one green spot on the earth's surface?'

'My dear, it will always be necessary to grow grass and corn.'

'By no means; depend upon it. Such things will be cultivated by chemical processes. There will not be one inch left to nature; the very oceans will somehow be tamed, the snow-mountains will be levelled. And with nature will perish art. What has a hungry Demos to do with the beautiful?'

Mrs. Eldon sighed gently.

'I shall not see it.'

Her eyes dreamed upon the soft-swaying boughs of a young chestnut. Hubert was watching her face; its look and the meaning implied in her words touched him profoundly.

'Mother!' he said under his breath.

'My dear?'

He drew nearer to her and just stroked with his fingers the silver lines which marked the hair on either side of her brows. He could see that she trembled and that her lips set themselves in hard self-conquest.

'What do you wish me to do when we have left the Manor?'

His own voice was hurried between two quiverings of the throat; his mother's only whispered in reply.

'That is for your own consideration, Hubert.'

'With your counsel, mother.'

'My counsel?'

'I ask it. I will follow it. I wish to be guided by you.'

He knelt by her, and his mother pressed his head against her bosom.

Later, she asked—

'Did you call also on the Walthams?'

He shook his head.

'Should you not do so, dear?'

'I think that must be later.'

This subject was not pursued.

The next day was Saturday. In the afternoon Hubert took a walk which had been his favourite one ever since he could remember, every step of the way associated with recollec-

tions of childhood, boyhood, or youth. It was along the lane which began in a farmyard close by the Manor and climbed with many turnings to the top of Stanbury Hill. This was ever the first route re-examined by his brother Godfrey and himself on their return from school at holiday-time. It was a rare region for bird-nesting, so seldom was it trodden save by a few farm-labourers at early morning or when the day's work was over. Hubert passed with a glance of recognition the bramble in which he had found his first spink's nest, the shadowed mossy bank whence had fluttered the hapless wren just when the approach of two prowling youngsters should have bidden her keep close. Boys on the egg-trail are not wont to pay much attention to the features of the country; but Hubert remembered that at a certain meadow-gate he had always rested for a moment to view the valley, some mute presage of things unimagined stirring at his heart. Was it even then nineteenth century? Not for him, seeing that the life of each of us reproduces the successive ages of the world. Belwick, roaring a few miles away, was but an isolated black patch on the earth's beauty, not, as he now understood it, a malignant cancer-spot, spreading day by day, corrupting, an augury of death. In those days it had seemed fast in the order of things that Wanley Manor should be

his home through life; how otherwise? Was it not the abiding-place of the Eldons from of old? Who had ever hinted at revolution? He knew now that revolution had been at work from an earlier time than that; whilst he played and rambled with his brother the framework of their life was crumbling about them. Belwick was already throwing a shadow upon Wanley. And now behold! he stood at the old gate, rested his hands where they had been wont to rest, turned his eyes in the familiar direction; no longer a mere shadow, there was Belwick itself.

His heart was hot with outraged affection, with injured pride. On the scarcely closed grave of that passion which had flamed through so brief a life sprang up the flower of natural tenderness, infinitely sweet and precious. For the first time he was fully conscious of what it meant to quit Wanley for ever; the past revealed itself to him, lovelier and more loved because parted from him by so hopeless a gulf. Hubert was not old enough to rate experience at its true value, to acquiesce in the law which wills that the day must perish before we can enjoy to the full its light and odour. He could only feel his loss, and rebel against the fate which had ordained it.

He had climbed but half-way up the hill; from this point onwards there was no view till

the summit was reached, for the lane proceeded between high banks and hedges. To gain the very highest point he had presently to quit the road by a stile and skirt the edge of a small rising meadow, at the top of which was an old cow-house with a few trees growing about it. Thence one had the finest prospect in the county.

He reached the stone shed, looked back for a moment over Wanley, then walked round to the other side. As he turned the corner of the building his eye was startled by the unexpected gleam of a white dress. A girl stood there; she was viewing the landscape through a field-glass, and thus remained unaware of his approach on the grass. He stayed his step and observed her with eyes of recognition. Her attitude, both hands raised to hold the glass, displayed to perfection the virginal outline of her white-robed form. She wore a straw hat of the plain masculine fashion; her brown hair was plaited in a great circle behind her head, not one tendril loosed from the mass; a white collar closely circled her neck; her waist was bound with a red girdle. All was grace and purity; the very folds towards the bottom of her dress hung in sculpturesque smoothness; the form of her half-seen foot bowed the herbage with lightest pressure. From the boughs above there fell upon her a dancing network of shadow.

Hubert only half smiled; he stood with his hands joined behind him, his eyes fixed upon her face, waiting for her to turn. But several moments passed and she was still intent on the landscape. He spoke.

'Will you let me look?'

Her hands fell, all but dropping the glass; still, she did not start with unbecoming shrug as most people do, the instinctive movement of guarding against a stroke; the falling of her arms was the only abrupt motion, her head turning in the direction of the speaker with a grace as spontaneous as that we see in a fawn that glances back before flight.

'O Mr. Eldon! How silently you have come!'

The wild rose of her cheeks made rivalry for an instant with the richer garden blooms, and the subsiding warmth left a pearly translucency as of a lily petal against the light.

She held her hand to him, delicately gloved, warm; the whole of it was hidden within Hubert's clasp.

'What were you looking at so attentively?' he asked.

'At Agworth station,' replied Adela, turning her eyes again in that quarter. 'My brother's train ought to be in by now, I think. He comes home every Saturday.'

'Does he?'

Hubert spoke without thought, his look resting upon the maiden's red girdle.

'I am glad that you are well again,' Adela said with natural kindness. 'You have had a long illness.'

'Yes; it has been a tiresome affair. Is Mrs. Waltham well?'

'Quite, thank you.'

'And your brother?'

'Alfred never had anything the matter with him in his life, I believe,' she answered, with a laugh.

'Fortunate fellow! Will you lend me the glass?'

She held it to him, and at the same moment her straying eye caught a glimpse of white smoke, far off.

'There comes the train!' she exclaimed. 'You will be able to see it between these two hills.'

Hubert looked and returned the glass to her, but she did not make use of it.

'Does he walk over from Agworth?' was Hubert's next question.

'Yes. It does him good after a week of Belwick.'

'There will soon be little difference between Belwick and Wanley,' rejoined Hubert, drily.

Adela glanced at him; there was sympathy and sorrow in the look.

'I knew it would grieve you,' she said.

'And what is your own feeling? Do you rejoice in the change as a sign of progress?'

'Indeed, no. I am very, very sorry to have our beautiful valley so spoilt. It is only——'

Hubert eyed her with sudden sharpness of scrutiny; the look seemed to check her words.

'Only what?' he asked. 'You find compensations?'

'My brother won't hear of such regrets,' she continued with a little embarrassment. 'He insists on the good that will be done by the change.'

'From such a proprietor as I should have been to a man of Mr. Mutimer's activity. To be sure, that is one point of view.'

Adela blushed.

'That is not my meaning, Mr. Eldon, as you know. I was speaking of the change without regard to who brings it about. And I was not giving my own opinion; Alfred's is always on the side of the working people; he seems to forget everybody else in his zeal for their interests. And then, the works are going to be quite a new kind of undertaking. You have heard of Mr. Mutimer's plans, of course?'

'I have an idea of them.'

'You think them mistaken?'

'No. I would rather say they don't

interest me. That seems to disappoint you, Miss Waltham. Probably you are interested in them?'

At the sound of her own name thus formally interjected, Adela just raised her eyes from their reflective gaze on the near landscape; then she became yet more thoughtful.

'Yes, I think I am,' she replied, with deliberation. 'The principle seems a just one. Devotion to a really unselfish cause is rare, I am afraid.'

'You have met Mr. Mutimer?'

'Once. My brother made his acquaintance, and he called on us.'

'Did he explain his scheme to you in detail?'

'Not himself. Alfred has told me all about it. He, of course, is delighted with it; he has joined what he calls the Union.'

'Are you going to join?' Hubert asked, smiling.

'I? I doubt whether they would have me.'

She laughed silverly, her throat tremulous, like that of a bird that sings. How significant the laugh was! the music of how pure a freshet of life!

'All the members, I presume,' said Hubert, 'are to be speedily enriched from the Wanley Mines and Iron Works?'

It was jokingly uttered, but Adela replied with some earnestness, as if to remove a false impression.

'Oh, that is quite a mistake, Mr. Eldon. There is no question of anyone being enriched, least of all Mr. Mutimer himself. The workmen will receive just payment, not mere starvation wages, but whatever profit there is will be devoted to the propaganda.'

'Propaganda! Starvation wages! Ah, I see you have gone deeply into these matters. How strangely that word sounds on your lips—propaganda!'

Adela reddened.

'Why strangely, Mr. Eldon?'

'One associates it with such very different speakers; it has such a terrible canting sound. I hope you will not get into the habit of using it—for your own sake.'

'I am not likely to use it much. I suppose I have heard it so often from Alfred lately. Please don't think,' she added rather hastily, 'that I have become a Socialist. Indeed, I dislike the name; I find it implies so many things that I could never approve of.'

Her way of speaking the last sentence would have amused a dispassionate critic, it was so distinctively the tone of Puritan maidenhood. From lips like Adela's it is delicious to hear such moral babbling. Oh, the gravity of

conviction in a white-souled English girl of eighteen! Do you not hear her say those words: 'things that I could never approve of'?

As her companion did not immediately reply, she again raised the field-glass to her eyes and swept the prospect.

'Can you see your brother on the road?' Hubert inquired.

'No, not yet. There is a trap driving this way. Why, Alfred is sitting in it! Oh, it is Mr. Mutimer's trap I see. He must have met Alfred at the station and have given him a ride.'

'Evidently they are great friends,' commented Eldon.

Adela did not reply. After gazing a little longer, she said—

'He will be home before I can get there.'

She screwed up the glasses and turned as if to take leave. But Hubert prepared to walk by her side, and together they reached the lane.

'Now I am going to run down the hill,' Adela said, laughing. 'I can't ask you to join in such childishness, and I suppose you are not going this way, either?'

'No, I am walking back to the Manor,' the other replied soberly. 'We had better say good-bye. On Monday we shall leave Wanley, my mother and I.'

'On Monday?'

The girl became graver.

'But only to go to Agworth?' she added.

'I shall not remain at Agworth. I am going to London.'

'To—to study?'

'Something or other, I don't quite know what. Good-bye!'

'Won't you come to say good-bye to us—to mother?'

'Shall you be at home to-morrow afternoon, about four o'clock say?'

'Oh, yes; the very time.'

'Then I will come to say good-bye.'

'In that case we needn't say it now, need we? It is only good-afternoon.'

She began to walk down the lane.

'I thought you were going to run,' cried Hubert.

She looked back, and her silver laugh made chorus with the joyous refrain of a yellow-hammer, piping behind the hedge. Till the turn of the road she continued walking, then Hubert had a glimpse of white folds waving in the act of flight, and she was beyond his vision.

CHAPTER VIII.

ADELA reached the house door at the very moment that Mutimer's trap drove up. She had run nearly all the way down the hill, and her soberer pace during the last ten minutes had not quite reduced the flush in her cheeks. Mutimer raised his hat with much *aplomb* before he had pulled up his horse, and his look stayed on her whilst Alfred Waltham was descending and taking leave.

'I was lucky enough to overtake your brother in Agworth,' he said.

'Ah, you have deprived him of what he calls his constitutional,' laughed Adela.

'Have I? Well, it isn't often I'm here over Saturday, so he can generally feel safe.'

The hat was again aired, and Richard drove away to the Wheatsheaf Inn, where he kept his horse at present.

Brother and sister went together into the parlour, where Mrs. Waltham immediately joined them, having descended from an upper room.

'So Mr. Mutimer drove you home!' she exclaimed, with the interest which provincial ladies, lacking scope for their energies, will display in very small incidents.

'Yes. By the way, I've asked him to come and have dinner with us to-morrow. He hadn't any special reason for going to town, and was uncertain whether to do so or not, so I thought I might as well have him here.'

Mr. Alfred always spoke in a somewhat emphatic first person singular when domestic arrangements were under discussion; occasionally the habit led to a passing unpleasantness of tone between himself and Mrs. Waltham. In the present instance, however, nothing of the kind was to be feared; his mother smiled very graciously.

'I'm glad you thought of it,' she said. 'It would have been very lonely for him in his lodgings.'

Neither of the two happened to be regarding Adela, or they would have seen a look of dismay flit across her countenance and pass into one of annoyance. When the talk had gone on for a few minutes Adela interposed a question.

'Will Mr. Mutimer stay for tea also, do you think, Alfred?'

'Oh, of course; why shouldn't he?'

It is the country habit; Adela might have

known what answer she would receive. She got out of the difficulty by means of a little disingenuousness.

'He won't want us to talk about Socialism all the time, will he?'

'Of course not, my dear,' replied Mrs. Waltham. 'Why, it will be Sunday.'

Alfred shouted in mirthful scorn.

'Well, that's one of the finest things I've heard for a long time, mother! It'll be Sunday, and *therefore* we are not to talk about improving the lot of the human race. Ye gods!'

Mrs. Waltham was puzzled for an instant, but the Puritan assurance did not fail her.

'Yes, but that is only improvement of their bodies, Alfred—food and clothing. The six days are for that you know.'

'Mother, mother, you will kill me! You are so uncommonly funny! I wonder your friends haven't long ago found some way of doing without bodies altogether. Now, I pray you, do not talk nonsense. Surely *that* is forbidden on the Sabbath, if only the Jewish one.'

'Mother is quite right, Alfred,' remarked Adela, with quiet affirmativeness, as soon as her voice could be heard. 'Your Socialism is earthly; we have to think of other things besides bodily comforts.'

'Who said we hadn't?' cried her brother.

'But I take leave to inform you that you won't get much spiritual excellence out of a man who lives a harder life than the nigger-slaves. If you women could only put aside your theories and look a little at obstinate facts! You're all of a piece. Which of you was it that talked the other day about getting the vicar to pray for rain? Ho, ho, ho! Just the same kind of thing.'

Alfred's combativeness had grown markedly since his making acquaintance with Mutimer. He had never excelled in the suaver virtues, and now the whole of the time he spent at home was devoted to vociferous railing at capitalists, priests, and women, his mother and sister serving for illustrations of the vices prevalent in the last-mentioned class. In talking he always paced the room, hands in pockets, and at times fairly stammered in his endeavour to hit upon sufficiently trenchant epithets or comparisons. When reasoning failed with his auditors, he had recourse to volleys of contemptuous laughter. At times he lost his temper, muttered words such as 'fools!'—'idiots!' and flung out into the open air. It looked as if the present evening was to be a stormy one. Adela noted the presage and allowed herself a protest *in limine*.

'Alfred, I do hope you won't go on in this

way whilst Letty is here. You mayn't think it, but you pain her very much.'

'Pain her! It's her education. She's had none yet, no more than you have. It's time you both began to learn.'

It being close upon the hour for tea, the young lady of whom there was question was heard to ring the door-bell. We have already had a passing glimpse of her, but since then she has been honoured by becoming Alfred's affianced. Letty Tew fulfilled all the conditions desirable in one called to so trying a destiny. She was a pretty, supple, sweet-mannered girl, and, as is the case with such girls, found it possible to worship a man whom in consistency she must have deemed the most condemnable of heretics. She and Adela were close friends; Adela, indeed, had no other friend in the nearer sense. The two were made of very different fibre, but that had not as yet distinctly shown.

Adela's reproof was not wholly without effect; her brother got through the evening without proceeding to his extremest truculence. Still the conversation was entirely of his leading, consequently not a little argumentative. He had brought home, as he always did on Saturday, a batch of ultra periodicals, among them the 'Fiery Cross,' and his own eloquence was supplemented by the reading of excerpts

from these lively columns. It was a combat of three to one, but the majority did little beyond throwing up hands at anything particularly outrageous. Adela said much less than usual.

'I tell you what it is, you three!' Alfred cried, at a certain climax of enthusiasm, addressing the ladies with characteristic courtesy, 'we'll found a branch of the Union in Wanley; I mean, in our particular circle of thickheads. Then, as soon as Mutimer's settlement gets going, we can coalesce. Now you two girls give next week to going round and soliciting subscriptions for the "Fiery Cross." People have had time to get over the first scare, and you know they can't refuse such as you. Quarterly, one-and-eightpence, including postage.'

'But, my dear Alfred,' cried Adela, 'remember that Letty and I are *not* Socialists!'

'Letty is, because I expect it of her, and you can't refuse to keep her in countenance.'

The girls laughed merrily at this anticipated lordship; but Letty said presently—

'I believe father will take the paper if I ask him. One is better than nothing, isn't it, Alfred?'

'Good. We book Stephen Tew, Esquire.'

'But surely you mustn't call him Esquire?' suggested Adela.

'Oh, he is yet unregenerate; let him keep his baubles.'

'How are the regenerate designated?'

'Comrade, we prefer.'

'Also applied to women?'

'Well, I suppose not. As the word hasn't a feminine, call yourselves plain Letty Tew and Adela Waltham, without meaningless prefix.'

'What nonsense you are talking, Alfred!' remarked his mother. 'As if everybody in Wanley could address young ladies by their Christian names!'

In this way did Alfred begin the 'propaganda' at home. Already the village was much occupied with the vague new doctrines represented by the name of Richard Mutimer; the parlour of the Wheatsheaf was loud of evenings with extraordinary debate, and gossips of a higher station had at length found a topic which promised to be inexhaustible. Of course the vicar was eagerly sounded as to his views. Mr. Wyvern preserved an attitude of scrupulous neutrality, contenting himself with correction of palpable absurdities in the stories going about. 'But surely you are not a Socialist, Mr. Wyvern?' cried Mrs. Mewling, after doing her best to pump the reverend gentleman, and discovering nothing. 'I am a Christian, madam,' was the reply, 'and have nothing

to do with economic doctrines.' Mrs. Mewling spread the phrase 'economic doctrines,' shaking her head upon the adjective, which was interpreted by her hearers as condemnatory in significance. The half-dozen shopkeepers were disposed to secret jubilation; it was probable that, in consequence of the doings in the valley, trade would look up. Mutimer himself was a centre of interest such as Wanley had never known. When he walked down the street the news that he was visible seemed to spread like wildfire; every house had its gazers. Excepting the case of the Walthams, he had not as yet sought to make personal acquaintances, appearing rather to avoid opportunities. On the whole it seemed likely that he would be popular. The little group of mothers with marriageable daughters waited eagerly for the day when, by establishing himself at the Manor, he would throw off the present semi-incognito, and become the recognised head of Wanley society. He would discover the necessity of having a lady to share his honours and preside at his table. Persistent inquiry seemed to have settled the fact that he was not married already. To be sure, there were awesome rumours that Socialists repudiated laws divine and human in matrimonial affairs, but the more sanguine were inclined to regard this as calumny, their charity finding a support in

their personal ambitions. The interest formerly attaching to the Eldons had altogether vanished. Mrs. Eldon and her son were now mere obstacles to be got rid of as quickly as possible. It was the general opinion that Hubert Eldon's illness was purposely protracted, to suit his mother's convenience. Until Mutimer's arrival there had been much talk about Hubert; whether, owing to Dr. Manns' indiscretion or through the servants at the Manor, it had become known that the young man was suffering from a bullet-wound, and the story circulated by Mrs. Mewling led gossips to suppose that he had been murderously assailed in that land of notorious profligacy known to Wanley as 'abroad.' That, however, was now become an old story. Wanley was anxious for the Eldons to go their way, and leave the stage clear.

Everyone of course was aware that Mutimer spent his Sundays in London (a circumstance, it was admitted, not altogether reassuring to the ladies with marriageable daughters), and his unwonted appearance in the village on the evening of the present Saturday excited universal comment. Would he appear at church next morning? There was a general directing of eyes to the Manor pew. This pew had not been occupied since the fateful Sunday when, at the conclusion of the morning service,

old Mr. Mutimer was discovered to have breathed his last. It was a notable object in the dim little church, having a wooden canopy supported on four slim oak pillars with vermicular moulding. From pillar to pillar hung dark curtains, so that when these were drawn the interior of the pew was entirely protected from observation. Even on the brightest days its occupants were veiled in gloom. To-day the curtains remained drawn as usual, and Richard Mutimer disappointed the congregation. Wanley had obtained assurance on one point—Socialism involved Atheism.

Then it came to pass that someone saw Mutimer approach the Walthams' house just before dinner time; saw him, moreover, ring and enter. A couple of hours, and the ominous event was everywhere being discussed. Well, well, it was not difficult to see what *that* meant. Trust Mrs. Waltham for shrewd generalship. Adela Waltham had been formerly talked of in connection with young Eldon; but Eldon was now out of the question, and behold his successor, in a double sense! Mrs. Mewling surrendered her Sunday afternoon nap and flew from house to house—of course in time for the dessert-wine at each. Her cry was *haro*! Really, this was sharp practice on Mrs Waltham's part; it was stealing a march before the commencement of the game. Did there not

exist a tacit understanding that movements were postponed until Mutimer's occupation of the Manor? Adela was a very nice young girl, to be sure, a very nice girl indeed, but one must confess that she had her eyes open. Would it not be well for united Wanley to let her know its opinion of such doings?

In the meantime Richard was enjoying himself, with as little thought of the Wanley gossips as of—shall we say, the old curtained pew in Wanley Church? He was perfectly aware that the Walthams did not represent the highest gentility, that there was a considerable interval, for example, between Mrs. Waltham and Mrs. Westlake; but the fact remained that he had never yet been on intimate terms with a family so refined. Radical revolutionist though he was, he had none of the grossness or obstinacy which would have denied to the *bourgeois* household any advantage over those of his own class. At dinner he found himself behaving circumspectly. He knew already that the cultivated taste objects to the use of a table-knife save for purposes of cutting; on the whole he saw grounds for the objection. He knew, moreover, that manducation and the absorption of fluids must be performed without audible gusto; the knowledge cost him some self-criticism. But there were numerous minor points of convention on which he was not so clear; it had never occurred to

him, for instance, that civilisation demands the breaking of bread, that, in the absence of silver, a fork must suffice for the dissection of fish, that a napkin is a graceful auxiliary in the process of a meal and not rather an embarrassing superfluity of furtive application. Like a wise man, he did not talk much during dinner, devoting his mind to observation. Of one thing he speedily became aware, namely that Mr. Alfred Waltham was so very much in his own house that it was not wholly safe to regard his demeanour as exemplary. Another point well certified was that if any person in the world could be pointed to as an unassailable pattern of comely behaviour that person was Mr. Alfred Waltham's sister. Richard observed Adela as closely as good manners would allow.

Talking little as yet—the young man at the head of the table gave others every facility for silence—Richard could occupy his thought in many directions. Among other things, he instituted a comparison between the young lady who sat opposite to him and someone—not a young lady, it is true, but of the same sex and about the same age. He tried to imagine Emma Vine seated at this table; the effort resulted in a disagreeable warmth in the lobes of his ears. Yes, but—he attacked himself—not Emma Vine dressed as he was accustomed to see her; suppose her possessed of

all Adela Waltham's exterior advantages. As his imagination was working on the hint, Adela herself addressed a question to him. He looked up, he let her voice repeat itself in inward echo. His ears were still more disagreeably warm.

It was a lovely day—warm enough to dine with the windows open. The faintest air seemed to waft sunlight from corner to corner of the room; numberless birds sang on the near boughs and hedges; the flowers on the table were like a careless gift of gold-hearted prodigal summer. Richard transferred himself in spirit to a certain square on the borders of Hoxton and Islington, within scent of the Regent's Canal. The house there was now inhabited by Emma and her sisters; they also would be at dinner. Suppose he had the choice: there or here? Adela addressed to him another question. The square vanished into space.

How often he had spoken scornfully of that word 'lady'! Were not all of the sex women? What need for that hateful distinction? Richard tried another experiment with his imagination. 'I had dinner with some people called Waltham last Sunday. The old woman I didn't much care about; but there was a young woman——' Well, why not? On the other hand suppose Emma Vine called

at his lodgings. 'A young woman called this morning, sir——' Well, why not?

Dessert was on the table. He saw Adela's fingers take an orange, her other hand holding a little fruit-knife. Now, who could have imagined that the simple paring of an orange could be achieved at once with such consummate grace and so naturally? In Richard's country they first bite off a fraction of the skin, then dig away with what of finger-nail may be available. He knew someone who would assuredly proceed in that way.

Metamorphosis! Richard Mutimer speculates on æsthetic problems.

'You, gentlemen, I dare say will be wicked enough to smoke,' remarked Mrs. Waltham, as she rose from the table.

'I tell you what we shall be wicked enough to do, mother,' exclaimed Alfred. 'We shall have two cups of coffee brought out into the garden, and spare your furniture!'

'Very well, my son. Your *two* cups evidently mean that Adela and I are not invited to the garden.'

'Nothing of the kind. But I know you always go to sleep, and Adela doesn't like tobacco smoke.'

'I go to sleep, Alfred! You know very well that I have a very different occupation for my Sunday afternoons.'

'I really don't care anything about smoking,' observed Mutimer, with a glance at Adela.

'Oh, you certainly shall not deprive yourself on my account, Mr. Mutimer,' said the girl, good-naturedly. 'I hope soon to come out into the garden, and I am not at all sure that my objection to tobacco is serious.'

Ah, if Mrs. Mewling could have heard that speech! Mrs. Mewling's age was something less than fifty; probably she had had time to forget how a young girl such as Adela speaks in pure frankness and never looks back to muse over a double meaning.

It was nearly three o'clock. Adela compared her watch with the sitting-room clock, and, the gentlemen having retired, moved about the room with a look of uneasiness. Her mother stood at the window, seemingly regarding the sky, in reality occupying her thoughts with things much nearer. She turned and found Adela looking at her.

'I want just to run over and speak to Letty,' Adela said. 'I shall very soon be back.'

'Very well, dear,' replied her mother, scanning her face absently. 'But don't let them keep you.'

Adela quickly fetched her hat and left the house. It was her habit to walk at a good pace, always with the same airy movement, as

though her feet only in appearance pressed the ground. On the way she again consulted her watch, and it caused her to flit still faster. Arrived at the abode of the Tews, she fortunately found Letty in the garden, sitting with two younger sisters, one a child of five years. Miss Tew was reading aloud to them, her book being 'Pilgrim's Progress.' At the sight of Adela the youngest of the three slipped down from her seat and ran to meet her with laughter and shaking of curls.

'Carry me round! carry me round!' cried the little one.

For it was Adela's habit to snatch up the flaxen little maiden, seat her upon her shoulder, and trot merrily round a circular path in the garden. But the sister next in age, whose thirteenth year had developed deep convictions, interposed sharply—

'Eva, don't be naughty! Isn't it Sunday?'

The little one, saved on the very brink of iniquity, turned away in confusion and stood with a finger in her mouth.

'I'll come and carry you round to-morrow, Eva,' said the visitor, stooping to kiss the reluctant face. Then, turning to the admonitress, 'Jessie, will you read a little? I want just to speak to Letty.'

Miss Jessie took the volume, made her countenance yet sterner, and, having drawn

Eva to her side, began to read in measured tones, reproducing as well as she could the enunciation of the pulpit. Adela beckoned to her friend, and the two walked apart.

'I'm in such a fix,' she began, speaking hurriedly, 'and there isn't a minute to lose. Mr. Mutimer has been having dinner with us; Alfred invited him. And I expect Mr. Eldon to come about four o'clock. I met him yesterday on the Hill; he came up just as I was looking out for Alfred with the glass, and I asked him if he wouldn't come and say good-bye to mother this afternoon. Of course I'd no idea that Mr. Mutimer would come to dinner; he always goes away for Sunday. Isn't it dreadfully awkward?'

'You think he wouldn't like to meet Mr. Mutimer?' asked Letty, savouring the gravity of the situation.

'I'm sure he wouldn't. He spoke about him yesterday. Of course he didn't say anything against Mr. Mutimer, but I could tell from his way of speaking. And then it's quite natural, isn't it? I'm really afraid. He'll think it so unkind of me. I told him we should be alone, and I shan't be able to explain. Isn't it tiresome?'

'It is, really! But of course Mr. Eldon will understand. To think that it should happen just this day!'

An idea flashed across Miss Tew's mind.

'Couldn't you be at the door when he comes, and just—just say, you know, that you're sorry, that you knew nothing about Mr. Mutimer coming?'

'I've thought of something else,' returned Adela, lowering her voice, as if to impart a project of doubtful propriety. 'Suppose I walk towards the Manor and—and meet him on the way, before he gets very far? Then I could save him the annoyance, couldn't I, dear?'

Letty widened her eyes. The idea was splendid, but—

'You don't think, dear, that it might be a little—that you might find it——?'

Adela reddened.

'It is only a piece of kindness. Mr. Eldon will understand, I'm sure. He asked me so particularly if we should be alone. I really feel it a duty. Don't you think I may go? I must decide at once.'

Letty hesitated.

'If you really advise me not to——' pursued Adela. 'But I'm sure I shall be glad when it's done.'

'Then go, dear. Yes, I would go if I were you.'

Adela now faltered.

'You really would go, in my place?'

'Yes, yes, I'm sure I should. You see, it

isn't as if it was Mr. Mutimer you were going to meet.'

'Oh, no, no! That would be impossible.'

'He will be very grateful,' murmured Letty, without looking up.

'If I go, it must be at once.'

'Your mother doesn't know he was coming?'

'No. I don't know why I haven't told her, really. I suppose we were talking so much of other things last night. And then I only got home just as Alfred did, and he said at once that he had invited Mr. Mutimer. Yes, I will go. Perhaps I'll come and see you again after church.'

Letty went back to 'Pilgrim's Progress.' Her sister Jessie enjoyed the sound of her own voice, and did not offer to surrender the book, so she sat by little Eva's side and resumed her Sunday face.

Adela took the road for the Manor, resisting the impulse to cast glances on either side as she passed the houses at the end of the village. She felt it to be more than likely that eyes were observing her, as it was an unusual time for her to be abroad, and the direction of her walk pointed unmistakably to one destination. But she made no account of secrecy; her errand was perfectly simple and with an object that no one could censure. If people tattled,

they alone were to blame. For the first time she experienced a little resentment of the public criticism which was so rife in Wanley, and the experience was useful—one of those inappreciable aids to independence which act by cumulative stress on a character capable of development and softly mould its outlines.

She passed the church, then the vicarage, and entered the hedgeway which by a long curve led to the Manor. She was slackening her pace, not wishing to approach too near to the house, when she at length saw Hubert Eldon walking towards her. He advanced with a look which was not exactly indifferent yet showed no surprise; the smile only came to his face when he was near enough to speak.

'I have come to meet you,' Adela began, with frankness which cost her a little agitation of breath. 'I am so very sorry to have misled you yesterday. As soon as I reached home, I found that my brother had invited Mr. Mutimer for to-day. I thought it would be best if I came and told you that—that we were not quite alone, as I said we should be.'

As she spoke Adela became distressed by perceiving, or seeming to perceive, that the cause which had led her to this step was quite inadequate. Of course it was the result of her having to forbear mention of the real point at issue; she could not say that she feared it

might be disagreeable to her hearer to meet Mutimer. But, put in the other way, her pretext for coming appeared trivial. Only with an extreme effort she preserved her even tone to the end of her speech.

'It is very kind of you,' Hubert replied almost warmly. 'I'm very sorry you have had the trouble.'

As she disclaimed thanks, Eldon's tact discovered the way of safety. Facing her with a quiet openness of look, he said, in a tone of pleasant directness which Adela had often felt to be peculiarly his own—

'I shall best thank you by admitting that I should have found it very unpleasant to meet Mr. Mutimer. You felt that, and hence your kindness. At the same time, no doubt, you pity me for my littleness.'

'I think it perfectly natural that such a meeting should be disagreeable. I believe I understand your feeling. Indeed, you explained it to me yesterday.'

'I explained it?'

'In what you said about the works in the valley.'

'True. Many people would have interpreted me less liberally.'

Adela's eyes brightened a little. But when she raised them, they fell upon something which disturbed her cheerfulness. This

was the face of Mrs. Mewling, who had come up from the direction of Wanley and was clearly about to pay a visit at the Manor. The lady smiled and murmured a greeting as she passed by.

'I suppose Mrs. Mewling is going to see my mother,' said Hubert, who also had lost a little of his naturalness.

A few more words and they again parted. Nothing further was said of the postponed visit. Adela hastened homewards, dreading lest she had made a great mistake, yet glad that she had ventured to come.

Her mother was just going out into the garden, where Alfred's voice sounded frequently in laughter or denunciation. Adela would have been glad to sit alone for a short time, but Mrs. Waltham seemed to wish for her company. She had only time to glance at herself in her looking-glass and just press a palm against each cheek.

Alfred was puffing clouds from his briar pipe, but Mutimer had ceased smoking. Near the latter was a vacant seat; Adela took it, as there was no other.

'What a good thing the day of rest is!' exclaimed Mrs. Waltham. 'I always feel thankful when I think of the poor men who toil so all through the week in Belwick, and how they must enjoy their Sunday. You

surely wouldn't make any change in *that*, Mr. Mutimer?'

'The change I should like to see would be in the other direction,' Richard replied. 'I would have holidays far more frequent. In the towns you can scarcely call Sunday a holiday. There's nothing to do but to walk about the streets. On the whole it does far more harm than good.'

'Do they never go to church?' asked Adela. She was experiencing a sort of irritation against their guest, a feeling traceable to more than one source; Mutimer's frequent glances did not tend to soothe it. She asked the question rather in a spirit of adverse criticism.

'The working people don't,' was the reply, 'except a Dissenting family here and there.'

'Perhaps that is one explanation of the Sundays being useless to them.'

Adela would scarcely have ventured upon such a tone in reference to any secular matter; the subject being religion, she was of course justified in expressing herself freely.

Mutimer smiled and held back his rejoinder for a moment. By that time Alfred had taken his pipe from his lips and was giving utterance to unmeasured scorn.

'But, Mr. Mutimer,' said Mrs. Waltham, waving aside her son's vehemence, 'you don't

seriously tell us that the working people have no religion? Surely that would be too shocking!'

'Yes, I say it seriously, Mrs. Waltham. In the ordinary sense of the word, they have no religion. The truth is, they have no time to think of it.'

'Oh, but surely it needs no thought——'

Alfred exploded.

'I mean,' pursued his mother, 'that, however busy we are, there must always be intervals to be spared from the world.'

Mutimer again delayed his reply. A look which he cast at Adela appeared to move her to speech.

'Have they not their evenings free, as well as every Sunday?'

'Happily, Miss Waltham, you can't realise their lives,' Richard began. He was not smiling now; Adela's tone had struck him like a challenge, and he collected himself to meet her. 'The man who lives on wages is never free; he sells himself body and soul to his employer. What sort of freedom does a man enjoy who may any day find himself and his family on the point of starvation just because he has lost his work? All his life long he has before his mind the fear of want—not only of straitened means, mind you, but of destitution and the workhouse. How can such a

man put aside his common cares? Religion is a luxury; the working man has no luxuries. Now, you speak of the free evenings; people always do, when they're asking why the working classes don't educate themselves. Do you understand what that free evening means? He gets home, say, at six o'clock, tired out; he has to be up again perhaps at five next morning. What can he do but just lie about half asleep? Why, that's the whole principle of the capitalist system of employment; it's calculated exactly how long a man can be made to work in a day without making him incapable of beginning again on the day following—just as it's calculated exactly how little a man can live upon, in the regulation of wages. If the workman returned home with strength to spare, employers would soon find it out, and workshop legislation would be revised—because of course it's the capitalists that make the laws. The principle is that a man shall have no strength left for himself; it's all paid for, every scrap of it, bought with the wages at each week end. What religion can such men have? Religion, I suppose, means thankfulness for life and its pleasures—at all events, that's a great part of it—and what has a wage-earner to be thankful for?'

'It sounds very shocking,' observed Mrs. Waltham, somewhat disturbed by the speaker's

growing earnestness. Richard paid no attention and continued to address Adela.

'I dare say you've heard of the early trains—workmen's trains—that they run on the London railways. If only you could travel once by one of those! Between station and station there's scarcely a man or boy in the carriage who can keep awake; there they sit, leaning over against each other, their heads dropping forward, their eyelids that heavy they can't hold them up. I tell you, it's one of the most miserable sights to be seen in this world. If you saw it, Miss Waltham, you'd pity them, I'm very sure of that! You only need to know what their life means. People who have never known hardship often speak more cruelly than they think, and of course it always will be so as long as the rich and the poor are two different races, as much apart as if there was an ocean between them.'

Adela's cheeks were warm. It was a novel sensation to be rebuked in this unconventional way. She was feeling a touch of shame as well as the slight resentment which was partly her class-instinct, partly of her sex.

'I feel that I have no right to give any opinion,' she said, in an undertone.

'Meaning, Adela,' commented her brother, 'that you have a very strong opinion and stick to it.'

'One thing I dare say you are thinking, Miss Waltham,' Richard pursued, 'if you'll allow me to say it. You think that I myself don't exactly prove what I've been saying—I mean to say, that I at all events have had free time, not only to read and reflect, but to give lectures and so on. Yes, and I'll explain that. It was my good fortune to have a father and mother who were very careful and hard-working and thoughtful people; I and my sister and brother were brought up in an orderly home, and taught from the first that ceaseless labour and strict economy were the things always to be kept in mind. All that was just fortunate chance; I'm not praising myself in saying I've been able to get more into my time than most other working men; it's my father and mother I have to thank for it. Suppose they'd been as ignorant and careless as most of their class are made by the hard lot they have to endure; why, I should have followed them, that's all. We've never had to go without a meal, and why? Just because we've all of us worked like slaves and never allowed ourselves to think of rest or enjoyment. When my father died, of course we had to be more careful than ever; but there were three of us to earn money, fortunately, and we kept up the home. We put our money by for the club every week, what's more.'

'The club?' queried Miss Waltham, to

whom the word suggested Pall Mall and vague glories which dwelt in her imagination.

'That's to make provision for times when we're ill or can't get work,' Mutimer explained. 'If a wage-earner falls ill, what has he to look to? The capitalist won't trouble himself to keep him alive; there's plenty to take his place. Well, that's my position, or was a few months ago. I don't suppose any working man has had more advantages. Take it as an example of the most we can hope for, and pray say what it amounts to! Just on the right side, just keeping afloat, just screwing out an hour here and there to work your brain when you ought to be taking wholesome recreation! That's nothing very grand, it seems to me. Yet people will point to it and ask what there is to grumble at!'

Adela sat uneasily under Mutimer's gaze; she kept her eyes down.

'And I'm not sure that I should always have got on as easily,' the speaker continued. 'Only a day or two before I heard of my relative's death, I'd just been dismissed from my employment; that was because they didn't like my opinions. Well, I don't say they hadn't a right to dismiss me, just as I suppose you've a right to kill as many of the enemy as you can in time of war. But suppose I couldn't have got work anywhere. I had nothing but

my hands to depend upon; if I couldn't sell my muscles I must starve, that's all.'

Adela looked at him for almost the first time. She had heard this story from her brother, but it came more impressively from Mutimer's own lips. A sort of heroism was involved in it, the championship of a cause regardless of self. She remained thoughtful with troublous colours on her face.

Mrs. Waltham was more obviously uneasy. There are certain things to which in good society one does not refer, first and foremost humiliating antecedents. The present circumstances were exceptional to be sure, but it was to be hoped that Mr. Mutimer would outgrow this habit of advertising his origin. Let him talk of the working classes if he liked, but always in the third person. The good lady began to reflect whether she might not venture shortly to give him friendly hints on this and similar subjects.

But it was nearly tea-time. Mrs. Waltham shortly rose and went into the house, whither Alfred followed her. Mutimer kept his seat, and Adela could not leave him to himself, though for the moment he seemed unconscious of her presence. When they had been alone together for a little while, Richard broke the silence.

'I hope I didn't speak rudely to you, Miss

Waltham. I don't think I need fear to say what I mean, but I know there are always two ways of saying things, and perhaps I chose the roughest.'

Adela was conscious of having said a few hard things mentally, and this apology, delivered in a very honest voice, appealed to her instinct of justice. She did not like Mutimer, and consequently strove against the prejudice which the very sound of his voice aroused in her; it was her nature to aim thus at equity in her personal judgments.

'To describe hard things we must use hard words,' she replied pleasantly, 'but you said nothing that could offend.'

'I fear you haven't much sympathy with my way of looking at the question. I seem to you to be going to work the wrong way.'

'I certainly think you value too little the means of happiness that we all have within our reach, rich and poor alike.'

'Ah, if you could only see into the life of the poor, you would acknowledge that those means are and can be nothing to them. Besides, my way of thinking in such things is the same as your brother's, and I can't expect you to see any good in it.'

Adela shook her head slightly. She had risen and was examining the leaves upon an apple branch which she had drawn down.

'But I'm sure you feel that there is need for doing something,' he urged, quitting his seat. 'You're not indifferent to the hard lives of the people, as most people are who have always lived comfortable lives?'

She let the branch spring up, and spoke more coldly.

'I hope I am not indifferent, but it is not in my power to do anything.'

'Will you let me say that you are mistaken in that?' Mutimer had never before felt himself constrained to qualify and adorn his phrases; the necessity made him awkward. Not only did he aim at polite modes of speech altogether foreign to his lips, but his own voice sounded strange to him in its forced suppression. He did not as yet succeed in regarding himself from the outside and criticising the influences which had got hold upon him; he was only conscious that a young lady—the very type of young lady that a little while ago he would have held up for scorn—was subduing his nature by her mere presence and exacting homage from him to which she was wholly indifferent. 'Everyone can give help in such a cause as this. You can work upon the minds of the people you talk with and get them to throw away their prejudices. The cause of the working classes seems so hopeless just because they're too far

away to catch the ears of those who oppress them.'

'I do not oppress them, Mr. Mutimer.'

Adela spoke with a touch of impatience. She wished to bring this conversation to an end, and the man would give her no opportunity of doing so. She was not in reality paying attention to his arguments, as was evident in her echo of his last words.

'Not willingly, but none the less you do so,' he rejoined. 'Everyone who lives at ease and without a thought of changing the present state of society is tyrannising over the people. Every article of clothing you put on means a life worn out somewhere in a factory. What would your existence be without the toil of those men and women who live and die in want of every comfort which seems as natural to you as the air you breathe? Don't you feel that you owe them something? It's a debt that can very easily be forgotten, I know that, and just because the creditors are too weak to claim it. Think of it in that way, and I'm quite sure you won't let it slip from your mind again.'

Alfred came towards them, announcing that tea was ready, and Adela gladly moved away.

'You won't make any impression there,' said Alfred, with a shrug of good-natured

contempt. 'Argument isn't understood by women. Now, if you were a revivalist preacher——'

Mrs. Waltham and Adela went to church. Mutimer returned to his lodgings, leaving his friend Waltham smoking in the garden.

On the way home after service, Adela had a brief murmured conversation with Letty Tew. Her mother was walking with Mrs. Mewling.

'It was evidently pre-arranged,' said the latter, after recounting certain details in a tone of confidence. 'I was quite shocked. On *his* part such conduct is nothing less than disgraceful. Adela, of course, cannot be expected to know.'

'I must tell her,' was the reply.

Adela was sitting rather dreamily in her bedroom a couple of hours later when her mother entered.

'Little girls shouldn't tell stories,' Mrs. Waltham began, with playfulness which was not quite natural. 'Who was it that wanted to go and speak a word to Letty this afternoon?'

'It wasn't altogether a story, mother,' pleaded the girl, shamed, but with an endeavour to speak independently. 'I did want to speak to Letty.'

'And you put it off, I suppose? Really, Adela, you must remember that a girl of your age has to be mindful of her self-respect. In Wanley you can't escape notice; besides——'

'Let me explain, mother.' Adela's voice was made firm by the suggestion that she had behaved unbecomingly. 'I went to Letty first of all to tell her of a difficulty I was in. Yesterday afternoon I happened to meet Mr. Eldon, and when he was saying good-bye I asked him if he wouldn't come and see you before he left Wanley. He promised to come this afternoon. At the time of course I didn't know that Alfred had invited Mr. Mutimer. It would have been so disagreeable for Mr. Eldon to meet him here, I made up my mind to walk towards the Manor and tell Mr. Eldon what had happened.'

'Why should Mr. Eldon have found the meeting with Mr. Mutimer disagreeable?'

'They don't like each other.'

'I dare say not. Perhaps it was as well Mr. Eldon didn't come. I should most likely have refused to see him.'

'Refused to see him, mother?'

Adela gazed in the utmost astonishment.

'Yes, my dear. I haven't spoken to you about Mr. Eldon, just because I took it for granted that he would never come in your way again. That he should have dared to speak to

you is something beyond what I could have imagined. When I went to see Mrs. Eldon on Friday I didn't take you with me, for fear lest that young man should show himself. It was impossible for you to be in the same room with him.'

'With Mr. Hubert Eldon? My dearest mother, what are you saying?'

'Of course it surprises you, Adela. I too was surprised. I thought there might be no need to speak to you of things you ought never to hear mentioned, but now I am afraid I have no choice. The sad truth is that Mr. Eldon has utterly disgraced himself. When he ought to have been here to attend Mr. Mutimer's funeral, he was living at Paris and other such places in the most shocking dissipation. Things are reported of him which I could not breathe to you; he is a bad young man!'

The inclusiveness of that description! Mrs. Waltham's head quivered as she gave utterance to the words, for at least half of the feeling she expressed was genuine. To her hearer the final phrase was like a thunderstroke. In a certain profound work on the history of her country which she had been in the habit of studying, the author, discussing the character of Oliver Cromwell, achieved a most impressive climax in the words, 'He was a bold, bad man.' The adjective 'bad' derived for Adela

a dark energy from her recollection of that passage; it connoted every imaginable phase of moral degradation. 'Dissipation' too; to her pure mind the word had a terrible sound; it sketched in lurid outlines hideous lurking-places of vice and disease. 'Paris and other such places.' With the name of Paris she associated a feeling of reprobation; Paris was the head-quarters of sin—at all events on earth. In Paris people went to the theatre on Sunday; that fact alone shed storm-light over the iniquitous capital.

She stood mute with misery, appalled, horrified. It did not occur to her to doubt the truth of her mother's accusations; the strange circumstance of Hubert's absence when every sentiment of decency would have summoned him home corroborated the charge. And she had talked familiarly with this man a few hours ago! Her head swam.

'Mr. Mutimer knew it,' proceeded her mother, noting with satisfaction the effect she was producing. 'That was why he destroyed the will in which he had left everything to Mr. Eldon; I have no doubt the grief killed him. And one thing more I may tell you. Mr. Eldon's illness was the result of a wound he received in some shameful quarrel; it is believed that he fought a duel.'

The girl sank back upon her chair. She was white and breathed with difficulty.

'You will understand now, my dear,' Mrs. Waltham continued, more in her ordinary voice, 'why it so shocked me to hear that you had been seen talking with Mr. Eldon near the Manor. I feared it was an appointment. Your explanation is all I wanted: it relieves me. The worst of it is, other people will hear of it, and of course we can't explain to everyone.'

'Why should people hear?' Adela exclaimed, in a quivering voice. It was not that she feared to have the story known, but mingled feelings made her almost passionate. 'Mrs. Mewling has no right to go about talking of me. It is very ill-bred, to say nothing of the unkindness.'

'Ah, but it is what we have to be prepared for, Adela. That is the world, my child. You see how very careful one has to be. But never mind; it is most fortunate that the Eldons are going. I am so sorry for poor Mrs. Eldon; who could have thought that her son would turn out so badly! And to think that he would have dared to come into my house! At least he had the decency not to show himself at church.'

Adela sat silent. The warring of her heart made outward sounds indistinct.

'After all,' pursued her mother, as if making

a great concession, 'I fear it is only too true that those old families become degenerate. One does hear such shocking stories of the aristocracy. But get to bed, dear, and don't let this trouble you. What a very good thing that all that wealth didn't go into such hands, isn't it? Mr. Mutimer will at all events use it in a decent way; it won't be scattered in vulgar dissipation.—Now kiss me, dear. I haven't been scolding you, pet; it was only that I felt I had perhaps made a mistake in not telling you these things before, and I blamed myself rather than you.'

Mrs. Waltham returned to her own room, and, after a brief turning over of speculations and projects begotten of the new aspect of things, found her reward for conscientiousness in peaceful slumber. But Adela was late in falling asleep. She, too, had many things to revolve, not worldly calculations, but the troubled phantasies of a virgin mind which is experiencing its first shock against the barriers of fate.

CHAPTER IX.

Richard Mutimer had strong domestic affections. The English artisan is not demonstrative in such matters, and throughout his life Richard had probably exchanged no word of endearment with any one of his kin, whereas language of the tempestuous kind was common enough from him to one and all of them; for all that, he clung closely to the hearth, and nothing in truth concerned him so nearly as the well-being of his mother, his sister, and his brother. For them he had rejoiced as much as for himself in the blessing of fortune. Now that the excitement of change had had time to subside, Richard found himself realising the fact that capital creates cares as well as removes them, and just now the centre of his anxieties lay in the house at Highbury to which his family had removed from Wilton Square.

He believed that as yet both the Princess and 'Arry were ignorant of the true state of affairs. It had been represented to them that he had 'come in for' a handsome legacy from

his relative in the Midlands, together with certain business responsibilities which would keep him much away from home; they were given to understand that the change in their own position and prospects was entirely of their brother's making. If Alice Maud was allowed to give up her work, to wear more expensive gowns, even to receive lessons on the pianoforte, she had to thank Dick for it. And when 'Arry was told that his clerkship at the drain-pipe manufactory was about to terminate, that he might enter upon a career likely to be more fruitful of distinction, again it was Dick's brotherly kindness. Mrs. Mutimer did her best to keep up this deception.

But Richard was well aware that the deception could not be lasting, and had the Princess alone been concerned he would probably never have commenced it. It was about his brother that he was really anxious. 'Arry might hear the truth any day, and Richard gravely feared the result of such a discovery. Had he been destined to future statesmanship, he could not have gone through a more profitable course of experience and reasoning than that into which he was led by brotherly solicitude. For 'Arry represented a very large section of Demos, alike in his natural characteristics and in the circumstances of his position; 'Arry, being 'Arry, was on the threshold of emancipation,

and without the smallest likelihood that the event would change his nature. Hence the nut to crack: Given 'Arry, by what rapid process of discipline can he be prepared for a state in which the 'Arrian characteristics will surely prove ruinous not only to himself but to all with whom he has dealings?

Richard saw reason to deeply regret that the youth had been put to clerking in the first instance, and not rather trained for some handicraft, clerkships being about the least hopeful of positions for a working-class lad of small parts and pronounced blackguard tendencies. He came to the conclusion that even now it was not too late to remedy this error. 'Arry must be taught what work meant, and, before he came into possession of his means, he must, if possible, be led to devote his poor washy brains to some pursuit quite compatible with the standing of a capitalist, to acquire knowledge of a kind which he could afterwards use for the benefit of his own pocket. Deficient bodily vigour had had something to do with his elevation to the office of the drain-pipe factory, but that he appeared to have outgrown. Much pondering enabled Richard to hit at length on what he considered a hopeful scheme; he would apprentice 'Arry to engineering, and send him in the evenings to follow the courses of lectures given to working men at the School

of Mines. In this way the lad would be kept constantly occupied, he would learn the meaning of work and study, and when he became of age would be in a position to take up some capitalist enterprise. Thus he might float clear of the shoals of blackguardism and develop into a tolerable member of society, at all events using his wealth in the direct employment of labour.

We have seen Richard engaged in æsthetic speculation; now we behold him busied in the training of a representative capitalist. But the world would be a terrible place if the men of individual energy were at all times consistent. Richard knew well enough that in planning thus for his brother's future he was inconsistency itself; but then the matter at issue concerned someone in whom he had a strong personal interest, and consequently he took counsel of facts. When it was only the world at large that he was bent on benefiting, too shrewd a sifting of arguments was not called for, and might seriously have interfered with his oratorical effects. In regulating private interests one cares singularly little for anything but hard demonstration and the logic of cause and effect.

It was now more than a month since 'Arry had been removed from the drain-pipes and set going on his new course, and Richard was watching the experiment gravely. Connected

with it was his exceptional stay at Wanley over the Sunday; he designed to go up to London quite unexpectedly about the middle of the ensuing week, that he might see how things worked in his absence. It is true there had been another inducement to remain in the village, for Richard had troubles of his own in addition to those imposed upon him by his family. The Manor was now at his disposal; as soon as he had furnished it there was no longer a reason for delaying his marriage. In appearance, that is to say; inwardly there had been growing for some weeks reasons manifold. They tormented him. For the first time in his life he had begun to sleep indifferently; when he had resolutely put from his mind thought of Alice and 'Arry, and seemed ready for repose, there crept out of less obvious lurking-places subtle temptations and suggestions which fevered his blood and only allured the more, the more they disquieted him. This Sunday night was the worst he had yet known. When he left the Walthams, he occupied himself for an hour or two in writing letters, resolutely subduing his thoughts to the subjects of his correspondence. Then he ate supper, and after that walked to the top of Stanbury Hill, hoping to tire himself. But he returned as little prepared for sleep as he had set out. Now he endeavoured to think of Emma Vine; by way of help, he sat down

and began a letter to her. But composition had never been so difficult; he positively had nothing to say. Still he must think of her. When he went up to town on Tuesday or Wednesday one of his first duties would be to appoint a day for his marriage. And he felt that it would be a duty harder to perform than any he had ever known. She seemed to have drifted so far from him, or he from her. It was difficult even to see her face in imagination; another face always came instead, and indeed needed no summoning.

He rose next morning with a stern determination to marry Emma Vine in less than a month from that date.

On Tuesday he went to London. A hansom put him down before the house in Highbury about six o'clock. It was a semi-detached villa, stuccoed, bow-windowed, of two storeys, standing pleasantly on a wide road skirted by similar dwellings, and with a row of acacias in front. He admitted himself with a latch-key and walked at once into the front room; it was vacant. He went to the dining-room and there found his mother at tea with Alice and 'Arry.

Mrs. Mutimer and her younger son were in appearance very much what they had been in their former state. The mother's dress was of better material, but she was not otherwise

outwardly changed. 'Arry was attired nearly as when we saw him in a festive condition on the evening of Easter Sunday; the elegance then reserved for high days and holidays now distinguished him every evening when the guise of the workshop was thrown off. He still wore a waistcoat of pronounced cut, a striking collar, a necktie of remarkable hue. It was not necessary to approach him closely to be aware that his person was sprinkled with perfumes. A recent acquisition was a heavy-looking ring on the little finger of his right hand. Had you been of his intimates, 'Arry would have explained to you the double advantage of this ring; not only did it serve as an adornment, but, as playful demonstration might indicate, it would prove of singular efficacy in pugilistic conflict.

At the sight of his elder brother, 'Arry hastily put his hands beneath the table, drew off the ornament, and consigned it furtively to his waistcoat pocket.

But Alice Maud was by no means what she had been. In all that concerned his sister, Mutimer was weak; he could quarrel with her, and abuse her roundly for frailties, but none the less was it one of his keenest pleasures to see her contented, even in ways that went quite against his conscience. He might rail against the vanity of dress, but if Alice needed

a new gown, Richard was the first to notice it. The neat little silver watch she carried was a gift from himself of some years back; with difficulty he had resisted the temptation to replace it with a gold one now that it was in his power to do so. Tolerable taste and handiness with her needle had always kept Alice rather more ladylike in appearance than the girls of her class are wont to be, but such comparative distinction no longer sufficed. After certain struggles with himself, Richard had told his mother that Alice must in future dress 'as a lady'; he authorised her to procure the services of a competent dressmaker, and, within the bounds of moderation, to expend freely. And the result was on the whole satisfactory. A girl of good figure, pretty face, and moderate wit, who has spent some years in a City showroom, does not need much instruction in the art of wearing fashionable attire becomingly. Alice wore this evening a gown which would not have been out of place at five o'clock in a West-end drawing-room; the sleeves were rather short, sufficiently so to exhibit a very shapely lower arm. She had discovered new ways of doing her hair; at present it was braided on either side of the forehead—a style which gave almost a thoughtful air to her face. When her brother entered she was eating a piece of sponge-cake, which she held to her

lips with peculiar delicacy, as if rehearsing graces.

'Why, there now!' cried Mrs. Mutimer, pleased to see her son. 'If I wasn't saying not five minutes ago as Dick was likely to come some day in the week! Wasn't I, Alice? What'll you have for your tea? There's some chops all ready in the 'ouse, if you'd care for them.'

Richard was not in a cheerful mood. He made no reply immediately, but went and stood before the fireplace, as he had been accustomed to do in the old kitchen.

'Will you have a chop?' repeated his mother.

'No; I won't eat just yet. But you can give me a cup of tea.'

Mrs. Mutimer and Alice exchanged a glance, as the former bent over the teapot. Richard was regarding his brother askance, and it resulted in a question, rather sharply put—

'Have you been to work to-day?'

'Arry would have lied had he dared; as it was, he made his plate revolve, and murmured, 'No; he 'adn't.'

'Why not?'

'I didn't feel well,' replied the youth, struggling for self-confidence and doing his best to put on an air of patient suffering.

Richard tapped his tea-cup and looked the look of one who reserves discussion for a more seasonable time.

'Daniel called last night,' remarked Mrs. Mutimer. 'He says he wants to see you. I think it's something particular; he seemed disappointed you weren't at the meeting on Sunday.'

'Did he? I'll see if I can get round to-night. If you like to have something cooked for me about eight o'clock, mother,' he added, consulting his watch; 'I shall be ready for it then.'

He turned to his brother again.

'Is there a class to-night? No? Very well, when they've cleared away, get your books out and show me what you've been doing. What are *you* going to do with yourself, Alice?'

The two addressed, as well as their mother, appeared to have some special cause for embarrassment. Instead of immediately replying, Alice played with crumbs and stole glances on either side.

'Me and 'Arry are going out,' she said at length, with a rather timid smile and a poise of the head in pretty wilfulness.

'Not 'Arry,' Richard observed significantly.

'Why not?' came from the younger Mutimer, with access of boldness.

'If you're not well enough to go to work

you certainly don't go out at night for your pleasure.'

'But it's a particular occasion,' explained Alice, leaning back with crossed arms, evidently prepared to do battle. 'A friend of 'Arry's is going to call and take us to the theatre.'

'Oh, indeed! And what friend is that?'

Mrs. Mutimer, who had been talked over to compliance with a project she felt Richard would not approve—she had no longer the old authority, and spent her days in trying to piece on the present life to the former—found refuge in a habit more suitable to the kitchen than the dining-room; she had collected all the tea-spoons within reach and was pouring hot-water upon them in the slop-basin, the familiar preliminary to washing up.

'A gen'leman as lives near here,' responded 'Arry. 'He writes for the newspapers. His name's Keene.'

'Oh? And how came you to know him?'

'Met him,' was the airy reply.

'And you've brought him here?'

'Well, he's been here once.'

'He said as he wanted to know you, Dick,' put in Mrs. Mutimer. 'He was really a civil-spoken man, and he gave 'Arry a lot of help with his books.'

'When was he here?'

'Last Friday.'

'And to-night he wants to take you to the theatre?'

The question was addressed to Alice.

'It won't cost him anything,' she replied. 'He says he can always get free passes.'

'No doubt. Is he coming here to fetch you? I shall be glad to see him.'

Richard's tone was ambiguous. He put down his cup, and said to Alice—

'Come and let me hear how you get on with your playing.'

Alice followed into the drawing-room. For the furnishing of the new house Richard had not trusted to his own instincts, but had taken counsel with a firm that he knew from advertisements. The result was commonplace, but not intolerable. His front room was regarded as the Princess's peculiar domain; she alone dared to use it freely—declined, indeed, to sit elsewhere. Her mother only came a few feet within the door now and then; if obliged by Alice to sit down, she did so on the edge of a chair as near to the door as possible. Most of her time Mrs. Mutimer still spent in the kitchen. She had resolutely refused to keep more than one servant, and everything that servant did she herself performed over again, even to the making of beds. To all Alice's objections she opposed an obstinate silence. What was the poor woman to do? She had

never in her life read more than an occasional paragraph of police news, and could not be expected to take up literature at her age. Though she made no complaint, signs were not wanting that she had begun to suffer in health. She fretted through the nights, and was never really at peace save when she anticipated the servant in rising early, and had an honest scrub at saucepans or fireirons before breakfast. Her main discomfort came of the feeling that she no longer had a house of her own; nothing about her seemed to be her property, with the exception of her old kitchen clock, and one or two articles she could not have borne to part with. From being a rather talkative woman she had become very reticent; she went about uneasily, with a look of suspicion or of fear. Her children she no longer ventured to command; the secret of their wealth weighed upon her, she was in constant dread on their behalf. It is a bad thing for one such as Mrs. Mutimer to be thrown back upon herself in novel circumstances, and practically debarred from the only relief which will avail her—free discussion with her own kind. The result is a species of shock to the system, sure to manifest itself before long in one or other form of debility.

Alice seated herself at the piano, and began a finger exercise, laboriously, imperfectly. For

the first week or two it had given her vast satisfaction to be learning the piano; what more certain sign of having achieved ladyhood? It pleased her to assume airs with her teacher —a very deferential lady—to put off a lesson for a fit of languidness; to let it be understood how entirely time was at her command. Now she was growing rather weary of flats and sharps, and much preferred to read of persons to whom the same nomenclature was very applicable in the books she obtained from a circulating library. Her reading had hitherto been confined to the fiction of the penny papers; to procure her pleasure in three gaily-bound volumes was another evidence of rise in the social scale; it was like ordering your wine by the dozen after being accustomed to a poor chance bottle now and then. At present Alice spent the greater part of her day floating on the gentle milky stream of English romance. Her brother was made a little uneasy by this taste; he had not studied the literature in question.

At half-past six a loud knock at the front door announced the expected visitor. Alice turned from the piano, and looked at her brother apprehensively. Richard rose, and established himself on the hearthrug, his hands behind him.

'What are you going to say to him, Dick?' Alice asked hurriedly.

'He says he wants to know me. I shall say, "Here I am."'

There were voices outside. 'Arry had opened the door himself, and now he ushered his acquaintance into the drawing-room. Mr. Keene proved to be a man of uncertain age—he might be eight-and-twenty, but was more probably ten years older. He was meagre, and of shrewd visage; he wore a black frock coat—rather shiny at the back—and his collar was obviously of paper. Incipient baldness endowed him in appearance with a noble forehead; he carried eye-glasses.

Whilst 'Arry mumbled a form of introduction, the journalist—so Mr. Keene described himself—stood in a bowing attitude, one hand to his glasses, seeming to inspect Richard with extreme yet respectful interest. When he spoke, it was in a rather mincing way, with interjected murmurs—the involuntary overflow, as it were, of his deep satisfaction.

'There are few persons in England whose acquaintance I desire more than that of Mr. Richard Mutimer; indeed, I may leave the statement unqualified and say at once that there is no one. I have heard you speak in public, Mr. Mutimer. My profession has necessarily led me to hear most of our platform orators, and in one

respect you distance them all—in the quality of sincerity. No speaker ever moved me as you did. I had long been interested in your cause; I had long wished for time and opportunity to examine into it thoroughly. Your address—I speak seriously—removed the necessity of further study. I am of your party, Mr. Mutimer. There is nothing I desire so much as to give and take the hand of brotherhood.'

He jerked his hand forward, still preserving his respectful attitude. Richard gave his own hand carelessly, smiling as a man does who cannot but enjoy flattery yet has a strong desire to kick the flatterer out of the room.

'Are you a member of the Union?' he inquired.

'With pride I profess myself a member. Some day—and that at no remote date—I may have it in my power to serve the cause materially.' He smiled meaningly. 'The press—you understand?' He spread his fingers to represent wide dominion. 'An ally to whom the columns of the *bourgeois* press are open—you perceive? It is the task of my life.'

'What papers do you write for?' asked Mutimer bluntly.

'Several, several. Not as yet in a leading capacity. In fact, I am feeling my way. With ends such as I propose to myself it won't do to

stand committed to any formal creed in politics. Politics, indeed! Ha, ha!'

He laughed scornfully. Then, turning to Alice—

'You will forgive me, I am sure, Miss Mutimer, that I address myself first to your brother—I had almost said your illustrious brother. To be confessed illustrious some day, depend upon it. I trust you are well?'

'Thanks, I'm very well indeed,' murmured Alice, rather disconcerted by such politeness.

'And Mrs. Mutimer? That is well. By-the-by,' he proceeded to Richard, 'I have a piece of work in hand that will deeply interest you. I am translating the great treatise of Marx, "Das Capital." It occurs to me that a chapter now and then might see the light in the "Fiery Cross." How do you view that suggestion?'

Richard did not care to hide his suspicion, and even such an announcement as this failed to move him to cordiality.

'You might drop a line about it to Mr. Westlake,' he said.

'Mr. Westlake? Oh! but I quite understood that you had practically the conduct of the paper.'

Richard again smiled.

'Mr. Westlake edits it,' he said.

Mr. Keene waved his hand in sign of friendly intelligence. Then he changed the subject.

'I ventured to put at Miss Mutimer's disposal certain tickets I hold—professionally—for the Regent's Theatre to-night—the dress circle. I have five seats in all. May I have the pleasure of your company, Mr. Mutimer?'

'I'm only in town for a night,' Richard replied; 'and I can't very well spare the time.'

'To be sure, to be sure; I was inconsiderate. Then Miss Mutimer and my friend Harry——'

'I'm sorry they're not at liberty,' was Richard's answer to the murmured interrogation. 'If they had accepted your invitation, be so good as to excuse them. I happen to want them particularly this evening.'

'In that case, I have of course not a word to say, save to express my deep regret at losing the pleasure of their company. But another time, I trust. I—I feel presumptuous, but it is my earnest hope to be allowed to stand on the footing not only of a comrade in the cause, but of a neighbour; I live quite near. Forgive me if I seem a little precipitate. The privilege is so inestimable.'

Richard made no answer, and Mr. Keene forthwith took his leave, suave to the last. When he was gone, Richard went to the dining-room, where his mother was sitting. Mrs.

Mutimer would have given much to be allowed to sit in the kitchen; she had a room of her own upstairs, but there she felt too remote from the centre of domestic operations, and the dining-room was a compromise. Her chair was always placed in a rather dusky corner; she generally had sewing on her lap, but the consciousness that her needle was not really in demand, and that she might just as well have sat idle, troubled her habits of mind. She often had the face of one growing prematurely aged.

'I hope you won't let them bring anyone they like,' Richard said to her. 'I've sent that fellow about his business; he's here for no good. He mustn't come again.'

'They won't heed me,' replied Mrs. Mutimer, using the tone of little interest with which she was accustomed to speak of details of the new order.

'Well, then, they've *got* to heed you, and I'll have that understood.—Why didn't 'Arry go to work to-day?'

'Didn't want to, I s'pose.'

'Has he stayed at home often lately?'

'Not at 'ome, but I expect he doesn't always go to work.'

'Will you go and sit with Alice in the front room? I'll have a talk with him.'

'Arry came whistling at the summons.

There was a nasty look on his face, the look which in his character corresponded to Richard's resoluteness. His brother eyed him.

'Look here, 'Arry,' the elder began, 'I want this explaining. What do you mean by shirking your work?'

There was no reply. 'Arry strode to the window and leaned against the side of it, in the attitude of a Sunday loafer waiting for the dram-shop to open.

'If this goes on,' Richard pursued, 'you'll find yourself in your old position again. I've gone to a good deal of trouble to give you a start, and it seems to me you ought to show a better spirit. We'd better have an understanding; do you mean to learn engineering, or don't you?'

'I don't see the use of it,' said the other.

'What do you mean? I suppose you must make your living somehow?'

'Arry laughed, and in such a way that Richard looked at him keenly, his brow gathering darkness.

'What are you laughing at?'

'Why, at you. There's no more need for me to work for a living than there is for you. As if I didn't know that!'

'Who's been putting that into your head?'

No scruple prevented the lad from breaking a promise he had made to Mr. Keene, the jour-

nalist, when the latter explained to him the disposition of the deceased Richard Mutimer's estate; it was only that he preferred to get himself credit for acuteness.

'Why, you don't think I was to be kept in the dark about a thing like that? It's just like you to want to make a fellow sweat the flesh off his bones when all the time there's a fortune waiting for him. What have I got to work for, I'd like to know? I don't just see the fun of it, and you wouldn't neither, in my case. You've took jolly good care you don't work yourself, trust you! I ain't a-going to work no more, so there it is, plain and flat.'

Richard was not prepared for this; he could not hit at once on a new course of procedure, and probably it was the uncertainty revealed in his countenance that brought 'Arry to a pitch of boldness not altogether premeditated. The lad came from the window, thrust his hands more firmly into his pockets and stood prepared to do battle for his freeman's rights. It is not every day that a youth of his stamp finds himself gloriously capable of renouncing work. There was something like a glow of conscious virtue on his face.

'You're not going to work any more, eh?' said his brother, half to himself. 'And who's going to support you?' he asked, with rather forced indignation.

'There's interest per cent. coming out of my money.'

'Arry must not be credited with conscious accuracy in his use of terms; he merely jumbled together two words which had stuck in his memory.

'Oh? And what are you going to do with your time?'

'That's my business. How do other men spend their time?'

The reply was obvious, but Richard felt the full seriousness of the situation and restrained his scornful impulses.

'Sit down, will you?' he said quietly, pointing to a chair.

His tone availed more than anger would have done.

'You tell me I take good care not to do any work myself? There you're wrong. I'm working hard every day.'

'Oh, we know what kind of work that is!'

'No, I don't think you do. Perhaps it would be as well if you were to see. I think you'd better go to Wanley with me.'

'What for?'

'I dare say I can give you a job for awhile.'

'I tell you I don't want a job.'

Richard's eye wandered rather vacantly. From the first it had been a question with him whether it would not be best to employ 'Arry

at Wanley, but on the whole the scheme adopted seemed more fruitful. Had the works been fully established it would have been a different thing. Even now he could keep the lad at work at Wanley, though not exactly in the way he desired. But if it came to a choice between a life of idleness in London and such employment as could be found for him at the works, 'Arry must clearly leave town at once. In a few days the Manor would be furnished; in a few weeks Emma would be there to keep house.

There was the difficulty of leaving his mother and sister alone. It looked as if all would have to quit London. Yet there would be awkwardness in housing the whole family at the Manor; and besides—

What the 'besides' implied Richard did not make formal even in his own thoughts. It stood for a vague objection to having all his relatives dwelling at Wanley. Alice he would not mind; it was not impossible to picture Alice in conversation with Mrs. and Miss Waltham; indeed, he desired that for her. And yet—

Richard was at an awkward pass. Whithersoever he looked he saw stumbling-blocks, the more disagreeable in that they rather loomed in a sort of mist than declared themselves for what they were. He had not the courage to

approach and examine them one by one; he had not the audacity to imagine leaps over them; yet somehow they had to be surmounted. At this moment, whilst 'Arry was waiting for the rejoinder to his last reply, Richard found himself wrestling again with the troubles which had kept him wakeful for the last two nights. He had believed them finally thrown and got rid of. Behold, they were more stubborn than ever.

He kept silence so long that his brother spoke.

'What sort of a job is it?'

To his surprise, Richard displayed sudden anger.

'If you weren't such a young fool you'd see what's best for you, and go on as I meant you to! What do you mean by saying you won't work? If you weren't such a thickhead you might go to school and be taught how to behave yourself, and how a man ought to live; but it's no use sending *you* to any such place. Can't you understand that a man with money has to find some sort of position in the world? I suppose you'd like to spend the rest of your life in public-houses and music-halls?'

Richard was well aware that to give way to his temper was worse than useless, and could only defeat every end; but something within him just now gnawed so intolerably that

there was nothing for it but an outbreak. The difficulties of life were hedging him in—difficulties he could not have conceived till they became matter of practical experience. And unfortunately a great many of them were not of an honest kind; they would not bear exposing. For a man of decision, Mutimer was getting strangely remote from practical roads.

'I shall live as I like,' observed 'Arry, thrusting out his legs and bending his body forward, a combination of movements which, I know not why, especially suggests dissoluteness.

Richard gave up the contest for the present, and went in silence from the room. As he joined his mother and sister they suddenly ceased talking.

'Don't cook anything for me,' he said, remaining near the door. 'I'm going out.'

'But you must have something to eat,' protested his mother. 'See'—she rose hastily—'I'll get a chop done at once.'

'I couldn't eat it if you did. I dare say you've got some cold meat. Leave it out for me; I don't know what time I shall get back.'

'You're very unkind, Dick,' here remarked Alice, who wore a mutinous look. 'Why couldn't you let us go to the theatre?'

Her brother vouchsafed no reply, but withdrew from the room, and almost immediately

left the house. He walked half a mile with his eyes turned to the ground, then noticed a hansom which was passing empty, and had himself driven to Hoxton. He alighted near the Britannia Theatre, and thence made his way by foul streets to a public-house called the 'Warwick Castle.' Only two customers occupied the bar; the landlord stood in his shirt-sleeves, with arms crossed, musing. At the sight of Mutimer he brightened up, and extended his hand.

'How d'you do; how d'you do, sir?' he exclaimed. 'Glad to see you.'

The shake of the hands was a tribute to old times, the 'sir' was a recognition of changed circumstances. Mr. Nicholas Dabbs, the brother of Daniel, was not a man to lose anything but failure to acknowledge social distinctions. A short time ago Daniel had expostulated with his brother on the use of 'sir' to Mutimer, eliciting the profound reply, 'D'you think he'd have 'ad that glass of whiskey if I'd called him Dick?'

'Dan home yet?' Mutimer inquired.

'Not been in five minutes. Come round, sir, will you? I know he wants to see you.'

A portion of the counter was raised, and Richard passed into a parlour behind the bar.

'I'll call him,' said the landlord.

Daniel appeared immediately.

'I want a bit of private talk,' he said to his brother. 'We'll have this door shut, if you don't mind.'

'You may as well bring us a drop of something first, Nick,' put in Richard. 'Give the order, Dan.'

'Wouldn't have 'ad it but for the "sir,"' chuckled Nicholas to himself. 'Never used to when he come here, unless I stood it.'

Daniel drew a chair to the table and stirred his tumbler thoughtfully, his nose over the steam.

'We're going to have trouble with 'Arry,' said Richard, who had seated himself on a sofa in a dispirited way. 'Of course someone's been telling him, and now the young fool says he's going to throw up work. I suppose I shall have to take him down yonder with me.'

'Better do so,' assented Daniel, without much attention to the matter.

'What is it you want to talk about, Dan?'

Mr. Dabbs had a few minutes ago performed the customary evening cleansing of his hands and face, but it had seemed unnecessary to brush his hair, which consequently stood upright upon his forehead, a wiry rampart, just as it had been thrust by the vigorously-applied towel. This, combined with an unwonted lugubriousness of visage, made Daniel's aspect

somewhat comical. He kept stirring very deliberately with his sugar-crusher.

'Why, it's this, Dick,' he began at length. 'And understand, to begin with, that I've got no complaint to make of nobody; it's only *things* as are awk'ard. It's this way, my boy. When you fust of all come and told me about what I may call the great transformation scene, you said, "Now it ain't a-goin' to make no difference, Dan," you said. Now wait till I've finished; I ain't complainin' of nobody. Well, and I tried to 'ope as it wouldn't make no difference, though I 'ad my doubts. "Come an' see us all just as usu'l," you said. Well, I tried to do so, and three or four weeks I come reg'lar, lookin' in of a Sunday night. But somehow it wouldn't work; something 'ad got out of gear. So I stopped it off. Then comes 'Arry a-askin' why I made myself scarce, sayin' as th' old lady and the Princess missed me. So I looked in again; but it was wuss than before, I saw I'd done better to stay away. So I've done ever since. Y' understand me, Dick?'

Richard was not entirely at his ease in listening. He tried to smile, but failed to smile naturally.

'I don't see what you found wrong,' he returned, abruptly.

'Why, I'm a-tellin' you, my boy, I didn't

find nothing wrong except in myself, as you may say. What's the good o' beatin' about the bush? It's just this 'ere, Dick, my lad. When I come to the Square, you know very well who it was as I come to see. Well, it stands to reason as I can't go to the new 'ouse with the same thoughts as I did to the old. Mind, I can't say as she'd ever a' listened to me; It's more than likely she wouldn't. But now that's all over, and the sooner I forget all about it the better for me. And th' only way to forget is to keep myself to myself,—see, Dick?'

The listener drummed with his fingers on the table, still endeavouring to smile.

'I've thought about all this, Dan,' he said at length, with an air of extreme frankness. 'In fact, I meant to have a talk with you. Of course I can't speak for my sister, and I don't know that I can even speak *to* her about it, but one thing I can say, and that is that she'll never be encouraged by me to think herself better than her old friends.' He gave a laugh. 'Why, that 'ud be a good joke for a man in my position! What am I working for, if not to do away with distinctions between capital and labour? You'll never have my advice to keep away, and that you know. Why, who am I going to marry myself? Do you suppose I shall cry off with Emma Vine just because I've got more money than I used to have?'

Daniel's eye was upon him as he said these words, an eye at once reflective and scrutinising. Richard felt it, and laughed yet more scornfully.

'I think we know you better than that,' responded Dabbs. 'But it ain't quite the same thing, you see. There's many a man high up as married a poor girl. I don't know how it is; perhaps because women is softer than men, and takes the polish easier. And then we know very well how it looks when a man as has no money goes after a girl as has a lot. No, no; it won't do, Dick.'

It was said with the voice of a man who emphasises a negative in the hope of eliciting a stronger argument on the other side. But Richard allowed the negative finality, in fact if not in appearance.

'Well, it's for your own deciding, Dan. All I have to say is that you don't stay away with my approval. Understand that.'

He left Daniel idly stirring the dregs of his liquor, and went off to pay another visit. This was to the familiar house in Wilton Square. There was a notice in the window that dress-making and millinery were carried on within.

Mrs. Clay (Emma's sister Kate) opened to him. She was better dressed than in former days, but still untidy. Emma was out making purchases, but could not be many minutes. In the kitchen the third sister, Jane, was busy

with her needle; at Richard's entrance she rose from her chair with evident feebleness: her illness of the spring had lasted long, and its effects were grave. The poor girl—she closely resembled Emma in gentleness of face, but the lines of her countenance were weaker—now suffered from pronounced heart disease, and the complicated maladies which rheumatic fever so frequently leaves behind it in women. She brightened at sight of the visitor, and her eyes continued to rest on his face with quiet satisfaction.

One of Kate's children was playing on the floor. The mother caught it up irritably, and began lamenting the necessity of washing its dirty little hands and face before packing it off to bed. In a minute or two she went upstairs to discharge these duties. Between her and Richard there was never much exchange of words.

'How are you feeling, Jane?' Mutimer inquired, taking a seat opposite her.

'Better—oh, very much better! The cough hasn't been not near so troublesome these last nights.'

'Mind you don't do too much work. You ought to have put your sewing aside by now.'

'Oh, this is only a bit of my own. I'm sorry to say there isn't very much of the other kind to do yet.'

'Comes in slowly, does it?' Richard asked, without appearance of much interest.

'It'll be better soon, I dare say. People want time, you see, to get to know of us.'

Richard's eyes wandered.

'Have you finished the port wine yet?' he asked, as if to fill a gap.

'What an idea! Why, there's four whole bottles left, and one as I've only had three glasses out of.'

'Emma was dreadfully disappointed when you didn't come as usual,' she said presently.

Richard nodded.

'Have you got into your house?' she asked timidly.

'It isn't quite ready yet; but I've been seeing about the furnishing.'

Jane dreamed upon the word. It was her habit to escape from the suffering weakness of her own life to joy in the lot which awaited her sister.

'And Emma will have a room all to herself?'

Jane had read of ladies' boudoirs; it was her triumph to have won a promise from Richard that Emma should have such a chamber.

'How is it going to be furnished? Do tell me.'

Richard's imagination was not active in the spheres of upholstery.

'Well, I can't yet say,' he replied, as if with an effort to rouse himself. 'How would you like it to be?'

Jane had ever before her mind a vague vision of bright-hued drapery, of glistening tables and chairs, of nobly patterned carpet, setting which her heart deemed fit for that priceless jewel, her dear sister. But to describe it all in words was a task beyond her. And the return of Emma herself saved her from the necessity of trying.

Hearing her enter the house, Richard went up to meet Emma, and they sat together in the sitting-room. This room was just as it had been in Mrs. Mutimer's day, save for a few ornaments from the mantelpiece, which the old lady could not be induced to leave behind her. Here customers were to be received—when they came; a room upstairs was set apart for work.

Emma wore a slightly anxious look; it showed even through her happiness. None the less, the very perceptible change which the last few months had wrought in her was in the direction of cheerful activity; her motions were quicker, her speech had less of self-distrust, she laughed more freely, displayed more of youthful spontaneity in her whole bearing.

The joy which possessed her at Richard's coming was never touched with disappointment at his sober modes of exhibiting affection. The root of Emma's character was steadfast faith. She did not allow herself to judge of Richard by the impulses of her own heart; those, she argued, were womanly; a man must be more independent in his strength. Of what a man ought to be she had but one criterion, Richard's self. Her judgment on this point had been formed five or six years ago; she felt that nothing now could ever shake it. All of expressed love that he was pleased to give her she stored in the shrine of her memory; many a light word forgotten by the speaker as soon as it was uttered lived still as a part of the girl's hourly life, but his reticences she accepted with no less devout humility. What need of repetitions? He had spoken to her the decisive word, and it was a column established for ever, a monument of that over which time had no power. Women are too apt to make their fondness a source of infinite fears; in Emma growth of love meant growth of confidence.

'Does all go well at the works?' was her first question. For she had made his interests her own, and was following in ardent imagination the undertaking which stamped her husband with nobility.

Richard talked on the subject for some moments; it was easier to do so than to come at once to the words he had in mind. But he worked round by degrees, fighting the way hard.

'The house is empty at last.'

'Is it? And you have gone to live there?'

'Not yet. I must get some furniture in first.'

Emma kept silence; the shadows of a smile journeyed trembling from her eyes to her lips.

The question voiced itself from Richard:

'When will you be ready to go thither?'

'I'm afraid—I don't think I must leave them just yet—for a little longer.'

He did not look at her. Emma was reading his face; the characters had become all at once a little puzzling; her own fault, of course, but the significance she sought was not readily discoverable.

'Can't they manage without you?' he asked. He believed his tone to express annoyance: in fact, it scarcely did so.

'I think it won't be very long before they can,' Emma replied; 'we have some plain sewing to do for Mrs. Robinson at the "Queen's Head," and she's promised to recommend us. I've just called there, and she really seems anxious to help. If Jane was stronger I shouldn't mind so much, but she mustn't work

hard just yet, and Kate has a great deal to do with the children. Besides, Kate can't get out of the slop sewing, and of course that won't do for this kind of work. She'll get the stitch very soon.'

Richard seemed to be musing.

'You see'—she moved nearer to his side, —'it's only just the beginning. I'm so afraid that they wouldn't be able to look about for work if I left them now. Jane hasn't the strength to go and see people; and Kate—well, you know, Richard, she can't quite suit herself to people's fancies. I'm sure I can do so much in a few weeks; just that'll make all the difference. The beginning's everything, isn't it?'

Richard's eye travelled over her face. He was not without understanding of the nobleness which housed in that plain-clad, simple-featured woman there before him. It had shot a ray to the secret places of his heart before now; it breathed a passing summer along his veins at this present.

'What need is there to bother?' he said, of purpose fixing his eye steadily on hers. 'Work'll come in time, I dare say. Let them look after their house.'

Perhaps Emma detected something not wholly sincere in this suggestion. She let her eyes fall, then raised them more quickly.

'Oh, but it's far better, Richard; and we

really have made a beginning. Jane, I'm sure, wouldn't hear of giving it up. It's wonderful what spirits she has. And she'd be miserable if she wasn't trying to work—I know so well how it would be. Just a few weeks longer. She really does get much better, and she says it's all "the business." It gives her something to occupy her mind.'

'Well, it's just as you like,' said Richard, rather absently.

'But you do think it best, don't you, dear?' she urged. 'It's good to finish things you begin, isn't it? I should feel rather dissatisfied with myself if I gave it up, and just when everything's promising. I believe it's what you really would wish me to do.'

'All right. I'll get the house furnished. But I can't give you much longer.'

He continued to talk in a mechanical way for a quarter of an hour, principally of the works; then said that he had promised to be home for supper, and took a rather hasty leave. He called good-night to the sisters from the top of the kitchen stairs.

Jane's face was full of joyous questioning as soon as her sister reappeared, but Emma disclosed nothing till they two were alone in the bedroom. To Emma it was the simplest thing in the world to put a duty before pleasure; she had no hesitation in telling her sister how

matters stood. And the other accepted it as pure love.

'I'm sure it'll only be a week or two before we can manage for ourselves,' Jane said. 'Of course, people are far readier to give you work than they would be to me or Kate. But it'll be all right when we're once started.'

'I shall be very sorry to leave you, dear,' murmured Emma. 'You'll have to be sure and let me know if you're not feeling well, and I shall come at once.'

'As if you could do that!' laughed the other. 'Besides, it'll be quite enough to keep me well to know you're happy.'

'I do hope Kate won't be trying.'

'Oh, I'm sure she won't. Why, it's quite a long time since she had one of her worst turns. It was only the hard work and the trouble as worried her. And now that's all over. It's you we have to thank for it all, Em.'

'You'll have to come and be with me sometimes, Jane. I know there'll always be something missing as long as you're out of my sight. And you must see to it yourself that the sheets is always aired; Kate's often so careless about that. You will promise me now, won't you? I shall be dreadfully anxious every washing day, I shall indeed. You know that the least thing 'll give you a chill.'

'Yes, I'll be careful,' said the other, half

sadly. She was lying in her bed, and Emma sat on a chair by the side. 'But you know it's not much use, love. I don't suppose as I shall live so very long. But I don't care, as soon as I know you're happy.'

'Jane, I should never know happiness if I hadn't my little sister to come and talk to. Don't think like that, don't for my sake, Janey dear!'

They laid their cheeks together upon the pillows.

'He'll be a good husband,' Jane whispered. 'You know that, don't you, Emmy?'

'No better in all this world! Why do you ask so?'

'No—no—I didn't mean anything. He said you mustn't wait much longer, didn't he?'

'Yes, he did. But he'd rather see me doing what's right. I often feel myself such a poor thing by him. I must try and show him that I do my best to follow his example. I'm ashamed almost, sometimes, to think I shall be his wife. It ought to be some one better than me.'

'Where would he find any one better, I'd like to know? Let him come and ask me about that! There's no man good enough for you, sister Emmy.'

Richard was talking with his sister Alice;

the others had gone to bed, and the house was quiet.

'I wasn't at all pleased to see that man here to-night,' he said. 'You shouldn't have been so ready to say yes when he asked you to go to the theatre. It was like his impudence!'

'Why, what ever's the harm, Dick? Besides, we must have some friends, and—really he looks a gentleman.'

'I'll tell you a secret,' returned her brother, with a half-smile, half-sneer. 'You don't know a gentleman yet, and you'll have to be very careful till you do.'

'How am I to learn, then?'

'Just wait. You've got enough to do with your music and your reading. Time enough for getting acquainted with gentlemen.'

'Aren't you going to let anybody come and see us, then?'

'You have the old friends,' replied Richard, raising his chin.

'You're thinking of Mr. Dabbs, I suppose. What did he want to see you for, Dick?'

Alice looked at him from the corner of her eye.

'I think I'll tell you. He says he doesn't intend to come here again. You've made him feel uncomfortable.'

The girl laughed.

'I can't help how he feels, can I? At all

events, Mr. Dabbs isn't a gentleman, is he, now?'

'He's an honest man, and that's saying a good deal, let me tell you. I rather thought you liked him.'

'Liked him? Oh, in a way, of course. But things are different.'

'How different?'

Alice looked up, put her head on one side, smiled her prettiest, and asked,—

'Is it true, what 'Arry says—about the money?'

He had wanted to get at this, and was, on the whole, not sorry to hear it. Richard was studying the derivation of virtue from necessity.

'What if it is?' he asked.

'Well, it makes things more different even than I thought, that's all.'

She sprang to her feet and danced across the room, one hand bent over her head. It was not an ungraceful picture. Her brother smiled.

'Alice, you'd better be guided by me. I know a little of the world, and I can help you where you'd make mistakes. Just keep to yourself for a little, my girl, and get on with your piano and your books. You can't do better, believe me. Never mind whether you've any one to see you or not; there's time enough. And I'll tell you another secret. Before you can tell a gentleman when you see him, you'll

have to teach yourself to be a lady. Perhaps that isn't quite so easy as you think.'

'How am I to learn, then?'

'We'll find a way before long. Get on with your playing and reading.'

Presently, as they were about to leave the room, the Princess inquired:

'Dick, how soon are you going to be married?'

'I can't tell you,' was the answer. 'Emma wants to put it off.'

CHAPTER X.

THE declaration of independence so nobly delivered by his brother 'Arry necessitated Richard's stay in town over the following day. The matter was laid before a family council, held after breakfast in the dining-room. Richard opened the discussion with some vehemence, and appealed to his mother and Alice for support. Alice responded heartily; Mrs. Mutimer was slower in coming to utterance, but at length expressed herself in no doubtful terms.

'If he don't go to his work,' she said sternly, 'it's either him or me'll have to leave this house. If he wants to disgrace us all and ruin himself, he shan't do it under my eyes.'

Was there ever a harder case? A high-spirited British youth asserts his intention of living a life of elegant leisure, and is forthwith scouted as a disgrace to the family. 'Arry sat under the gross injustice with an air of doggish defiance.

'I thought you said I was to go to Wanley?'

he exclaimed at length, angrily, glaring at his brother.

Richard avoided the look.

'You'll have to learn to behave yourself first,' he replied. 'If you can't be trusted to do your duty here, you're no good to me at Wanley.'

'Arry would give neither yes nor no. The council broke up after formulating an ultimatum.

In the afternoon Richard had another private talk with the lad. This time he addressed himself solely to 'Arry's self-interest, explained to him the opportunities he would lose if he neglected to make himself a practical man. What if there was money waiting for him? The use of money was to breed money, and nowadays no man was rich who didn't constantly increase his capital. As a great ironmaster, he would hold a position impossible for him to attain in any other way; he would employ hundreds, perhaps thousands, of men; society would recognise him. What could he expect to be if he did nothing but loaf about the streets?

This was going the right way to work. Richard found that he was making an impression, and gradually fell into a kinder tone, so that in the end he brought 'Arry to moderately cheerful acquiescence.

'And don't let men like that Keene make a fool of you,' the monitor concluded. 'Can't you see that fellows like him'll hang on and

make their profit out of you if you know no better than to let them? You just keep to yourself, and look after your own future.'

A suggestion that cunning was required of him flattered the youth to some purpose. He had begun to reflect that after all it might be more profitable to combine work and pleasure. He agreed to pursue the course planned for him.

So Richard returned to Wanley, carrying with him a small satisfaction and many great anxieties. Nor did he visit London again until four weeks had gone by; it was understood that the pressure of responsibilities grew daily more severe. New Wanley, as the industrial settlement in the valley was to be named, was shaping itself in accordance with the ideas of the committee with which Mutimer took counsel, and the undertaking was no small one.

In spite of Emma's cheerful anticipations, 'the business' meanwhile made little progress. A graver trouble was the state of Jane's health; the sufferer seemed wasting away. Emma devoted herself to her sister. Between her and Mutimer there was no further mention of marriage. In Emma's mind a new term had fixed itself—that of her sister's recovery; but there were dark moments when dread came to her that not Jane's recovery, but something else, would set her free. In the early autumn Richard persuaded her to take the invalid to

the sea-side, and to remain with her there for three weeks. Mrs. Clay during that time lived alone, and was very content to receive her future brother-in-law's subsidy, without troubling about the work which would not come in.

Autumn had always been a peaceful and bounteous season at Wanley; then the fruit-trees bent beneath their golden charge, and the air seemed rich with sweet odours. But the autumn of this year was unlike any that had visited the valley hitherto. Blight had fallen upon all produce; the crop of apples and plums was bare beyond precedent. The west wind breathing up between the hill-sides only brought smoke from newly built chimneys; the face of the fields was already losing its purity, and taking on a dun hue. Where a large orchard had flourished were two streets of small houses, glaring with new brick and slate. The works were extending by degrees, and a little apart rose the walls of a large building which would contain library, reading-rooms, and lecture-hall, for the use of the industrial community. New Wanley was in a fair way to claim for itself a place on the map.

The Manor was long since furnished, and Richard entertained visitors. He had provided himself with a housekeeper, as well as the three or four necessary servants, and kept a saddle-horse as well as that which drew his trap to

and fro when he had occasion to go to Agworth station. His establishment was still a modest one; all things considered, it could not be deemed inconsistent with his professions. Of course, stories to the contrary got about; among his old comrades in London, thorough-going Socialists like Messrs. Cowes and Cullen, who perhaps thought themselves a little neglected by the great light of the Union, there passed occasionally nods and winks, which were meant to imply much. There were rumours of banqueting which went on at Wanley; the Manor was spoken of by some who had not seen it as little less than a palace—nay, it was declared by one or two of the shrewder tongued that a man-servant in livery opened the door, a monstrous thing if true. Worse than this was the talk which began to spread among the Hoxton and Islington Unionists of a certain young woman in a poor position to whom Mutimer had in former days engaged himself, and whom he did not now find it convenient to marry. A few staunch friends Richard had, who made it their business stoutly to contradict the calumnies which came within their hearing, Daniel Dabbs the first of them. But even Daniel found himself before long preferring silence to speech on the subject of Emma Vine. He grew uncomfortable about it, and did not know what to think.

The first of Richard's visitors at the Manor were Mr. and Mrs. Westlake. They came down from London one day, and stayed over till the next. Other prominent members of the Union followed, and before the end of the autumn Richard entertained some dozen of the rank and file, all together, paying their railway fares, and housing them from Saturday to Monday. These men, be it noted in passing, distinguished themselves from that day onwards by unsparing detraction whenever the name of Mutimer came up in private talk, though, of course, they were the loudest in applause when platform reference to their leader demanded it. Besides the expressly invited, there was naturally no lack of visitors who presented themselves voluntarily. Among the earliest of these was Mr. Keene, the journalist. He sent in his name one Sunday morning requesting an interview on a matter of business, and, on being admitted, produced a copy of the *Belwick Chronicle*, which contained a highly eulogistic semi-biographic notice of Mutimer.

'I feel I ought to apologise to you for this liberty,' said Keene, in his flowing way, 'and that is why I have brought the paper myself. You will observe that it is one of a series—notable men of the day. I supply the *Chronicle* with a London letter, and give them one of these little sketches fortnightly. I knew your

modesty would stand in the way if I consulted you in advance, so I can only beg pardon *post delictum*, as we say.'

There stood the heading in bold type, 'MEN OF THE DAY,' and beneath it 'XI. Mr. Richard Mutimer.' Mr. Keene had likewise brought in his pocket the placard of the newspaper, whereon Richard saw his name prominently displayed. The journalist stayed for luncheon.

Alfred Waltham was frequently at the Manor. Mutimer now seldom went up to town for Sunday; if necessity took him thither, he chose some week-day. On Sunday he always spent a longer or shorter time with the Walthams, frequently having dinner at their house. He hesitated at first to invite the ladies to the Manor; in his uncertainty on social usages he feared lest there might be impropriety in a bachelor giving such an invitation. He appealed to Alfred, who naturally laughed the scruple to scorn, and accordingly Mrs. and Miss Waltham were begged to honour Mr. Mutimer with their company. Mrs. Waltham reflected a little, but accepted. Adela would much rather have remained at home, but she had no choice.

By the end of September this invitation had been repeated, and the Walthams had lunched a second time at the Manor, no other guests being present. On the afternoon of the following day Mrs. Waltham and her daughter were

talking together in their sitting-room, and the former led the conversation, as of late she almost invariably did when alone with her daughter, to their revolutionary friend.

'I can't help thinking, Adela, that in all essentials I never knew a more gentlemanly man than Mr. Mutimer. There must be something superior in his family; no doubt we were altogether mistaken in speaking of him as a mechanic.'

'But he has told us himself that he was a mechanic,' replied Adela, in the impatient way in which she was wont to speak on this subject.

'Oh, that is his modesty. And not only modesty; his views lead him to pride himself on a poor origin. He was an engineer, and we know that engineers are in reality professional men. Remember old Mr. Mutimer; he was a perfect gentleman. I have no doubt the family is really a very good one. Indeed, I am all but sure that I remember the name in Hampshire; there was a Sir something Mutimer—I'm convinced of it. No one really belonging to the working class ever bore himself as Mr. Mutimer does. Haven't you noticed the shape of his hands, my dear?'

'I've only noticed that they are very large, and just what you would expect in a man who had done much rough work.'

Mrs. Waltham laughed noisily.

'My dear child, how *can* you be so perverse? The shape of the fingers is perfect. Do pray notice them next time.'

'I really cannot promise, mother, to give special attention to Mr. Mutimer's hands.'

Mrs. Waltham glanced at the girl, who had laid down a book she was trying to read, and, with lowered eyes, seemed to be collecting herself for further utterance.

'Why are you so prejudiced, Adela?'

'I am not prejudiced at all. I have no interest of any kind in Mr. Mutimer.'

The words were spoken hurriedly and with a ring almost of hostility. At the same time the girl's cheeks flushed. She felt herself hard beset. A network was being woven about her by hands she could not deem other than loving; it was time to exert herself that the meshes might not be completed, and the necessity cost her a feeling of shame.

'But your brother's friend, my dear. Surely you ought not to say that you have no interest in him at all.'

'I do say it, mother, and I wish to say it so plainly that you cannot after this mistake me. Alfred's friends are very far from being necessarily my friends. Not only have I no interest in Mr. Mutimer, I even a little dislike him.'

'I had no idea of that, Adela,' said her mother, rather blankly.

'But it is the truth, and I feel I ought to have tried to make you understand that sooner. I thought you would see that I had no pleasure in speaking of him.'

'But how is it possible to dislike him? I confess that is very hard for me to understand. I am sure his behaviour to you is perfect—so entirely respectful, so gentlemanly.'

'No, mother, that is not quite the word to use. You are mistaken; Mr. Mutimer is *not* a perfect gentleman.'

It was said with much decision, for to Adela's mind this clenched her argument. Granted the absence of certain qualities which she held essential in a gentleman, there seemed to her no reason for another word on the subject.

'Pray, when has he misbehaved himself?' inquired her mother, with a touch of pique.

'I cannot go into details. Mr. Mutimer has no doubt many excellent qualities; no doubt he is really an earnest and a well-meaning man. But if I am asked to say more than that, it must be the truth—as it seems to me. Please, mother dear, don't ask me to talk about him in future. And there is something else I wish to say. I do hope you won't be offended with me, but indeed I—I hope you will not ask me to go to the Manor again. I feel I ought not to go. It is painful; I suffer when I am there.'

'How strange you are to-day, Adela! Really, I think you might allow me to decide what is proper and what is not. My experience is surely the best judge. You are worse than unkind, Adela; it's rude to speak to me like that.'

'Dear mother,' said the girl, with infinite gentleness, 'I am very, very sorry. How could I be unkind or rude to you? I didn't for a moment mean that my judgment was better than yours; it is my feelings that I speak of. You won't ask me to explain—to say more than that? You must understand me?'

'Oh yes, my dear, I understand you too well,' was the stiff reply. 'Of course I am old-fashioned, and I suppose old-fashioned people are a little coarse; *their* feelings are not quite as fine as they might be. We will say no more for the present, Adela. I will do my best not to lead you into disagreeable situations through my lack of delicacy.'

There were tears in Adela's eyes.

'Mother, now it is you who are unkind. I am so sorry that I spoke. You won't take my words as they were meant. Must I say that I cannot let Mr. Mutimer misunderstand the way in which I regard him? He comes here really so very often, and if we begin to go there too—— People are talking about it, indeed they are; Letty has told me so. How can I help feeling pained?'

Mrs. Waltham drew out her handkerchief and appeared mildly agitated. When Adela bent and kissed her she sighed deeply, then said in an undertone of gentle melancholy:

'I ask your pardon, my dear. I am afraid there has been a little misunderstanding on both sides. But we won't talk any more of it —there, there!'

By which the good lady of course meant that she would renew the subject on the very earliest opportunity, and that, on the whole, she was not discouraged. Mothers are often unaware of their daughters' strong points, but their weaknesses they may be trusted to understand pretty well.

The little scene was just well over, and Adela had taken a seat by the window, when a gentleman who was approaching the front door saw her and raised his hat. She went very pale.

The next moment there was a knock at the front door.

'Mother,' the girl whispered, as if she could not speak louder, 'it is Mr. Eldon.'

'Mr. Eldon?' Mrs. Waltham drew herself up with dignity, then started from her seat. 'The idea of his daring to come here!'

She intercepted the servant who was going to open the door.

'Jane, we are not at home!'

The maid stood in astonishment. She was not used to the polite fictions of society; never before had that welcome mortal, an afternoon visitor, been refused at Mrs. Waltham's.

'What did you say, please, mum?'

'You will say that we are not at home, neither I nor Miss Waltham.'

Even if Hubert Eldon had not seen Adela at the window he must have been dull not to read the meaning of the servant's singular face and tone. He walked away with a quiet 'Thank you.'

Mrs. Waltham cast a side glance at Adela when she heard the outer door close. The girl had reopened her book.

'I'm not sorry that he came. Was there ever such astonishing impudence? If *that* is gentlemanly, then I must confess I—— Really I am not at all sorry he came: it will give him a lesson.'

'Mr. Eldon may have had some special reason for calling,' Adela remarked disinterestedly.

'My dear, I have no business of any kind with Mr. Eldon, and it is impossible that he can have any with me.'

Adela very shortly went from the room.

That evening Richard had for guest at dinner Mr. Willis Rodman; so that gentleman named himself on his cards, and so he liked to

be announced. Mr. Rodman was invaluable as surveyor of the works; his experience appeared boundless, and had been acquired in many lands. He was now a Socialist of the purest water, and already he enjoyed more of Mutimer's intimacy than anyone else. Richard not seldom envied the easy and, as it seemed to him, polished manner of his subordinate, and wondered at it the more since Rodman declared himself a proletarian by birth, and, in private, was fond of referring to the hardships of his early life. That there may be no needless mystery about Mr. Rodman, I am under the necessity of stating the fact that he was the son of a prosperous railway contractor, that he was born in Canada, and would have succeeded to a fortune on his father's death, but for an unhappy *contretemps* in the shape of a cheque, whereof Mr. Rodman senior (the name was not Rodman, but the true one is of no importance) disclaimed the signature. From that day to the present good and ill luck had alternated in the young man's career. His fortunes in detail do not concern us just now; there will be future occasion for returning to the subject.

'Young Eldon has been in Wanley to-day,' Mr. Rodman remarked as he sat over his wine after dinner.

'Has he?' said Richard, with indifference. 'What's he been after?'

'I saw him going up towards the Walthams'.'

Richard exhibited more interest.

'Is he a particular friend of theirs?' he asked. He had gathered from Alfred Waltham that there had been a certain intimacy between the two families, but desired more detailed information than his disciple had offered.

'Well, he used to be,' replied Rodman, with a significant smile. 'But I don't suppose Mrs. W. gave him a very affectionate reception today. His little doings have rather startled the good people of Wanley, especially since he has lost his standing. It wouldn't have mattered much, I dare say, but for that.'

'But was there anything particular up there?'

Mutimer had a careworn expression as he asked, and he nodded his head, as if in the direction of the village, with a certain weariness.

'I'm not quite sure. Some say there was, and others deny it, as I gather from general conversation. But I suppose it's at an end now, in any case.'

'Mrs. Waltham would see to that, you mean?' said Mutimer, with a short laugh.

'Probably.'

Rodman made his glass revolve, his fingers on the stem.

'Take another cigar. I suppose they're not too well off, the Walthams?'

'Mrs. Waltham has an annuity of two hundred and fifty pounds, that's all. The girl—Miss Waltham—has nothing.'

'How the deuce do you get to know so much about people, Rodman?'

The other smiled modestly, and made a silent gesture, as if to disclaim any special abilities.

'So he called there to-day? I wonder whether he stayed long?'

'I will let you know to-morrow.'

On the morrow Richard learnt that Hubert Eldon had been refused admittance. The information gave him pleasure. Yet all through the night he had been earnestly hoping that he might hear something quite different, had tried to see in Eldon's visit a possible salvation for himself. For the struggle which occupied him more and more had by this time declared its issues plainly enough; daily the temptation became stronger, the resources of honour more feeble. In the beginning he had only played with dangerous thoughts; to break faith with Emma Vine had appeared an impossibility, and a marriage such as his fancy substituted, the most improbable of things. But in men of Richard's stamp that which allures the fancy will, if circumstances give but a little encouragement, soon take hold upon the planning brain. His acquaintance with the Walthams had ripened

to intimacy, and custom nourished his self-confidence; moreover, he could not misunderstand the all but direct encouragement which on one or two recent occasions he had received from Mrs. Waltham. That lady had begun to talk to him, when they were alone together, in almost a motherly way, confiding to him this or that peculiarity in the characters of her children, deploring her inability to give Adela the pleasures suitable to her age, then again pointing out the advantage it was to a girl to have all her thoughts centred in home.

'I can truly say,' remarked Mrs. Waltham in the course of the latest such conversation, 'that Adela has never given me an hour's serious uneasiness. The dear child has, I believe, no will apart from her desire to please me. Her instincts are so beautifully submissive.'

To a man situated like Mutimer this tone is fatal. In truth it seemed to make offer to him of what he supremely desired. No such encouragement had come from Adela herself, but that meant nothing either way; Richard had already perceived that maidenly reserve was a far more complex matter in a girl of gentle breeding, than in those with whom he had formerly associated; for all he knew, increase of distance in manner might represent the very hope that he was seeking. That hope he sought, in all save the hours when conscience

lorded over silence, with a reality of desire such as he had never known. Perhaps it was not Adela, and Adela alone, that inspired this passion; it was a new ideal of the feminine addressing itself to his instincts. Adela had the field to herself, and did indeed embody in almost an ideal degree the fine essence of distinctly feminine qualities which appeal most strongly to the masculine mind. Mutimer was not capable of love in the highest sense; he was not, again, endowed with strong appetite; but his nature contained possibilities of refinement which, in a situation like the present, constituted motive force the same in its effects as either form of passion. He was suffering, too, from the *malaise* peculiar to men who suddenly acquire riches; secret impulses drove him to gratifications which would not otherwise have troubled his thoughts. Of late he had been yielding to several such caprices. One morning the idea possessed him that he must have a horse for riding, and he could not rest till the horse was purchased and in his stable. It occurred to him once at dinner-time that there were sundry delicacies which he knew by name but had never tasted; forthwith he gave orders that these delicacies should be supplied to him, and so there appeared upon his breakfast-table a *pâté de foie gras.* Very similar in kind was his desire to possess Adela Waltham.

And the voice of his conscience lost potency, though it troubled him more than ever, even as a beggar will sometimes become rudely clamorous when he sees that there is no real hope of extracting an alms. Richard was embarked on the practical study of moral philosophy; he learned more in these months of the constitution of his inner being than all his literature of 'free thought' had been able to convey to him. To break with Emma, to cast his faith to the winds, to be branded henceforth in the sight of his intimate friends as a mere traitor, and an especially mean one to boot—that at the first blush was of the things so impossible that one does not trouble to study their bearings. But the wall of habit once breached, the citadel of conscience laid bare, what garrison was revealed? With something like astonishment, Richard came to recognise that the garrison was of the most contemptible and tatterdemalion description. Fear of people's talk—absolutely nothing else stood in his way.

Had he, then, no affection for Emma? Hardly a scrap. He had never even tried to persuade himself that he was in love with her, and the engagement had on his side been an affair of cool reason. His mother had practically brought it about; for years it had been a pet project of hers, and her joy was great in its realisation. Mrs. Vine and she had been

lifelong gossips; she knew that to Emma had descended the larger portion of her parent's sterling qualities, and that Emma was the one wife for such a man as Richard. She talked him into approval. In those days Richard had no dream of wedding above his class, and he understood very well that Emma Vine was distinguished in many ways from the crowd of working girls. There was no one else he wished to marry. Emma would feel herself honoured by his choice, and, what he had not himself observed, his mother led him to see that yet deeper feelings were concerned on the girl's side. This flattered him—a form of emotion to which he was ever susceptible—and the match was speedily arranged.

He had never repented. The more he knew of Emma, the more confirmation his favourable judgments received. He even knew at times a stirring of the senses, which is the farthest that many of his kind ever progress in the direction of love. Of the nobler features in Emma's character he of course remained ignorant; they did not enter into his demands upon woman, and he was unable to discern them even when they were brought prominently before him. She would keep his house admirably, would never contradict him, would mother his children to perfection, and even would go so far as to take an intelligent in-

terest in the Propaganda. What more could a man look for?

So there was no strife between old love and new; so far as it concerned himself, to put Emma aside would not cost a pang. The garrison was absolutely mere tongue, mere gossip of public-house bars, firesides, &c.—more serious, of the Socialist lecture-rooms. And what of the girl's own feeling? Was there no sense of compassion in him? Very little. And in saying so I mean anything but to convey that Mutimer was conspicuously hard-hearted. The fatal defect in working people is absence of imagination, the power which may be solely a gift of nature and irrespective of circumstances, but which in most of us owes so much to intellectual training. Half the brutal cruelties perpetrated by uneducated men and women are directly traceable to lack of the imaginative spirit, which comes to mean lack of kindly sympathy. Mutimer, we know, had got for himself only the most profitless of educations, and in addition nature had scanted him on the emotional side. He could not enter into the position of Emma deserted and hopeless. Want of money was intelligible to him, so was bitter disappointment at the loss of a good position, but the former he would not allow Emma to suffer; and the latter she would, in the nature of things, soon get over. Her love for him he

judged by his own feeling, making allowance, of course, for the weakness of women in affairs such as this. He might admit that she would 'fret,' but the thought of her fretting did not affect him as a reality. Emma had never been demonstrative, had never sought to show him all that was in her heart; hence he rated her devotion lightly.

The opinion of those who knew him! What of the opinion of Emma herself? Yes, that went for much; he knew shame at the thought, perhaps keener shame than in anticipating the judgment, say, of Daniel Dabbs. No one of his acquaintances thought of him so highly as Emma did; to see himself dethroned, the object of her contempt, was a bitter pill to swallow. In all that concerned his own dignity Richard was keenly appreciative; he felt in advance every pricking of the blood that was in store for him if he became guilty of this treachery. Yes, from that point of view he feared Emma Vine.

Considerations of larger scope did not come within the purview of his intellect. It never occurred to him, for instance, that in forfeiting his honour in this instance he began a process of undermining which would sooner or later threaten the stability of the purposes on which he most prided himself. A suggestion that domestic perfidy was in the end incompatible

with public zeal would have seemed to him ridiculous, and for the simple reason that he recognised no moral sanctions. He could not regard his nature as a whole; he had no understanding for the subtle network of communication between its various parts. Nay, he told himself that the genuineness and value of his life's work would be increased by a marriage with Adela Waltham; he and she would represent the union of classes—of the wage-earning with the *bourgeois*, between which two lay the real gist of the combat. He thought of this frequently, and allowed the thought to inspirit him.

To the question of whether Adela would ever find out what he had done, and, if so, with what result, he gave scarcely a moment. Marriages are not undone by subsequent discovery of moral faults on either side.

This is a tabular exposition of the man's consciousness. Logically, there should result from it a self-possessed state of mind, bordering on cynicism. But logic was not predominant in Mutimer's constitution. So far from contemplating treason with the calm intelligence which demands judgment on other grounds than the common, he was in reality possessed by a spirit of perturbation. Such reason as he could command bade him look up and view with scorn the ragged defenders of the fort;

but whence came this hail of missiles which kept him so sore? Clearly there was some element of his nature which eluded grasp and definition, a misty influence making itself felt here and there. To none of the sources upon which I have touched was it clearly traceable; in truth, it arose from them all. The man had never in his life been guilty of offence against his graver conscience; he had the sensation of being about to plunge from firm footing into untried depths. His days were troubled; his appetite was not what it should have been; he could not take the old thorough interest in his work. It was becoming clear to him that the matter must be settled one way or another with brief delay.

One day at the end of September he received a letter addressed by Alice. On opening it he found, with much surprise, that the contents were in his mother's writing. It was so very rarely that Mrs. Mutimer took up that dangerous instrument, the pen, that something unusual must have led to her doing so at present. And, indeed, the letter contained unexpected matter. There were numerous errors of orthography, and the hand was not very legible; but Richard got at the sense quickly enough.

'I write this,' began Mrs. Mutimer, 'because it's a long time since you've been to see us, and because I want to say something that's better

written than spoken. I saw Emma last night, and I'm feeling uncomfortable about her. She's getting very low, and that's the truth. Not as she says anything, nor shows it, but she's got a deal on her hands, and more on her mind. You haven't written to her for three weeks. You'll be saying it's no business of mine, but I can't stand by and see Emma putting up with things as there isn't no reason. Jane is in a very bad way, poor girl; I can't think she'll live long. Now, Dick, what I'm aiming at you'll see. I can't understand why you don't get married and done with it. Jane won't never be able to work again, and that Kate'll never keep up a-dress-making. Why don't you marry Emma, and take poor Jane to live with you, where she could be well looked after? for she won't never part from her sister. And she does so hope and pray to see Emma married before she goes. You can't surely be waiting for her death. Now, there's a good lad of mine, come and marry your wife at once, and don't make delays. That's all, but I hope you'll think of it; and so, from your affectionate old mother, S. MUTIMER.'

Richard read the letter several times, and sat at home through the morning in despondency. It had got to the pass that he could not marry Emma; for all his suffering he no longer gave a glance in that direction. Not even if Adela Waltham refused him; to have a 'lady'

for his wife was now an essential in his plans for the future, and he knew that the desired possession was purchasable for coin of the realm. No way of retreat any longer; movement must be forward, at whatever cost.

He let a day intervene, then replied to his mother's letter. He represented himself as worked to death and without a moment for his private concerns; it was out of the question for him to marry for a few weeks yet. He would write to Emma, and would send her all the money she could possibly need to supply the sick girl with comforts. She must keep up her courage, and be content to wait a short while longer. He was quite sure she did not complain; it was only his mother's fancy that she was in low spirits, except, of course, on Jane's account.

Another fortnight went by. Skies were lowering towards winter, and the sides of the valley showed bare patches amid the rich-hued death of leaves; ere long a night of storm would leave 'ruined choirs.' Richard was in truth working hard. He had just opened a course of lectures at a newly established Socialist branch in Belwick. The extent of his daily correspondence threatened to demand the services of a secretary in addition to the help already given by Rodman. Moreover, an event of importance was within view; the New Wanley Public Hall

was completed, and its formal opening must be made an occasion of ceremony. In that ceremony Richard would be the central figure. He proposed to gather about him a representative company; not only would the Socialist leaders attend as a matter of course, invitations should also be sent to prominent men in the conventional lines of politics. A speech from a certain Radical statesman, who could probably be induced to attend, would command the attention of the press. For the sake of preliminary trumpetings in even so humble a journal as the *Belwick Chronicle*, Mutimer put himself in communication with Mr. Keene. That gentleman was now a recognised visitor at the house in Highbury; there was frequent mention of him in a close correspondence kept up between Richard and his sister at this time. The letters which Alice received from Wanley were not imparted to the other members of the family; she herself studied them attentively, and with much apparent satisfaction.

For advice on certain details of the approaching celebration Richard had recourse to Mrs. Waltham. He found her at home one rainy morning. Adela, aware of his arrival, retreated to her little room upstairs. Mrs. Waltham had a slight cold; it kept her close by the fireside, and encouraged confidential talk.

'I have decided to invite about twenty people

to lunch,' Richard said. 'Just the members of the committee and a few others. It'll be better than giving a dinner. Westlake's lecture will be over by four o'clock, and that allows people to get away in good time. The workmen's tea will be at half-past five.'

'You must have refreshments of some kind for casual comers,' counselled Mrs. Waltham.

'I've thought of that. Rodman suggests that we shall get the "Wheatsheaf" people to have joints and that kind of thing in the refreshment-room at the Hall from half-past twelve to half-past one. We could put up some notice to that effect in Agworth station.'

'Certainly, and inside the railway carriages.'

Mutimer's private line, which ran from the works to Agworth station, was to convey visitors to New Wanley on this occasion.

'I think I shall have three or four ladies,' Richard pursued. 'Mrs. Westlake'll be sure to come, and I think Mrs. Eddlestone—the wife of the Trades Union man, you know. And I've been rather calculating on you, Mrs. Waltham; do you think you could——?'

The lady's eyes were turned to the window, watching the sad, steady rain.

'Really, you're making a downright Socialist of me, Mr. Mutimer,' she replied, with a laugh which betrayed a touch of sore throat. 'I'm half afraid to accept such an invitation. Shouldn't

I be there on false pretences, don't you think?'

Richard mused; his legs were crossed, and he swayed his foot up and down.

'Well, no, I can't see that. But I tell you what would make it simpler: do you think Mr. Wyvern would come if I asked him?'

'Ah, now, that would be capital! Oh, ask Mr. Wyvern, by all means. Then, of course, I should be delighted to accept.'

'But I haven't much hope that he'll come. I rather think he regards me as his enemy. And, you see, I never go to church.'

'What a pity that is, Mr. Mutimer! Ah, if I could only persuade you to think differently about those things! There really are so many texts that read quite like Socialism; I was looking them over with Adela on Sunday. What a sad thing it is that you go so astray! It distresses me more than you think. Indeed, if I may tell you such a thing, I pray for you nightly.'

Mutimer made a movement of discomfort, but laughed off the subject.

'I'll go and see the vicar, at all events,' he said. 'But must your coming depend on his?'

Mrs. Waltham hesitated.

'It really would make things easier.'

'Might I, in that case, hope that Miss Waltham would come?'

Richard seemed to exert himself to ask the question. Mrs. Waltham sank her eyes, smiled feebly, and in the end shook her head.

'On a public occasion, I'm really afraid——'

'I'm sure she would like to know Mrs. Westlake,' urged Richard, without his usual confidence. 'And if you and her brother——'

'If it were not a Socialist gathering.'

Richard uncrossed his legs and sat for a moment looking into the fire. Then he turned suddenly.

'Mrs. Waltham, may I ask her myself?'

She was visibly agitated. There was this time no affectation in the tremulous lips and the troublous, unsteady eyes. Mrs. Waltham was not by nature the scheming mother who is indifferent to the upshot if she can once get her daughter loyally bound to a man of money. Adela's happiness was a very real care to her; she would never have opposed an unobjectionable union on which she found her daughter's heart bent, but circumstances had a second time made offer of brilliant advantages, and she had grown to deem it an ordinance of the higher powers that Adela should marry possessions. She flattered herself that her study of Mutimer's character had been profound; the necessity of making such a study excused, she thought, any little excess of familiarity in which she had indulged, for it had long been clear to her that

Mutimer would some day make an offer. He lacked polish, it was true, but really he was more a gentleman than a great many whose right to the name was never contested. And then he had distinctly high aims; such a man could never be brutal in the privacy of his home. There was every chance of his achieving some kind of eminence; already she had suggested to him a Parliamentary career, and the idea had not seemed altogether distasteful. Adela herself was as yet far from regarding Mutimer in the light of a future husband; it was perhaps true that she even disliked him. But then a young girl's likes and dislikes have, as a rule, small bearing on her practical content in the married state; so, at least, Mrs. Waltham's experience led her to believe. Only, it was clear that there must be no precipitancy. Let the ground be thoroughly prepared.

'May I advise you, Mr. Mutimer?' she said, in a lowered voice, bending forward. 'Let me deliver the invitation. I think it would be better, really. We shall see whether you can persuade Mr. Wyvern to be present. I promise you to—in fact, not to interpose any obstacle if Adela thinks she can be present at the lunch.'

'Then I'll leave it so,' said Richard, more cheerfully. Mrs. Waltham could see that his nerves were in a dancing state. Really, he had much fine feeling.

CHAPTER XI.

It being only midday, Richard directed his steps at once to the Vicarage, and had the good fortune to find Mr. Wyvern within.

'Be seated, Mr. Mutimer; I'm glad to see you,' was the vicar's greeting.

Their mutual intercourse had as yet been limited to an exchange of courtesies in public, and one or two casual meetings at the Walthams' house. Richard had felt shy of the vicar, whom he perceived to be a clergyman of other than the weak-brained type, and the circumstances of the case would not allow Mr. Wyvern to make advances. The latter proceeded with friendliness of tone, speaking of the progress of New Wanley.

'That's what I've come to see you about,' said Richard, trying to put himself at ease by mentally comparing his own worldly estate with that of his interlocutor, yet failing as often as he felt the scrutiny of the vicar's dark-gleaming eye. 'We are going to open the Hall.' He

added details. 'I shall have a number of friends who are interested in our undertaking to lunch with me on that day. I wish to ask if you will give us the pleasure of your company.'

Mr. Wyvern reflected for a moment.

'Why, no, sir,' he replied at length, using the Johnsonian phrase with grave courtesy. 'I'm afraid I cannot acknowledge your kindness as I should wish to. Personally, I would accept your hospitality with pleasure, but my position here, as I understand it, forbids me to join you on that particular occasion.'

'Then personally you are not hostile to me, Mr. Wyvern?'

'To you personally, by no means.'

'But you don't like the movement?'

'In so far as it has the good of men in view it interests me, and I respect its supporters.'

'But you think we go the wrong way to work?'

'That is my opinion, Mr. Mutimer.'

'What would you have us do?'

'To see faults is a much easier thing than to originate a sound scheme. I am far from prepared with any plan of social reconstruction.'

Nor could Mr. Wyvern be moved from the negative attitude, though Mutimer pressed him.

'Well, I'm sorry you won't come,' Richard

said as he rose to take his leave. 'It didn't strike me that you would feel out of place.'

'Nor should I. But you will understand that my opportunities of being useful in the village depend on the existence of sympathetic feeling in my parishioners. It is my duty to avoid any behaviour which could be misinterpreted.'

'Then you deliberately adapt yourself to the prejudices of unintelligent people?'

'I do so, deliberately,' assented the vicar, with one of his fleeting smiles.

Richard went away feeling sorry that he had courted this rejection. He would never have thought of inviting a 'parson' but for Mrs. Waltham's suggestion. After all, it mattered little whether Adela came to the luncheon or not. He had desired her presence because he wished her to see him as an entertainer of guests such as the Westlakes, whom she would perceive to be people of refinement; it occurred to him, too, that such an occasion might aid his suit by exciting her ambition; for he was anything but confident of immediate success with Adela, especially since recent conversations with Mrs. Waltham. But in any case she would attend the afternoon ceremony, when his glory would be proclaimed.

Mrs. Waltham was anxiously meditative of plans for bringing Adela to regard her Socialist

wooer with more favourable eyes. She, too, had hopes that Mutimer's fame in the mouths of men might prove an attraction, yet she suspected a strength of principle in Adela which might well render all such hopes vain. And she thought it only too likely, though observation gave her no actual assurance of this, that the girl still thought of Hubert Eldon in a way to render it doubly hard for any other man to make an impression upon her. It was dangerous, she knew, to express her abhorrence of Hubert too persistently; yet, on the other hand, she was convinced that Adela had been so deeply shocked by the revelations of Hubert's wickedness that her moral nature would be in arms against her lingering inclination. After much mental wear and tear, she decided to adopt the strong course of asking Alfred's assistance. Alfred was sure to view the proposed match with hearty approval, and, though he might not have much influence directly, he could in all probability secure a potent ally in the person of Letty Tew. This was rather a brilliant idea; Mrs. Waltham waited impatiently for her son's return from Belwick on Saturday.

She broached the subject to him with much delicacy.

'I am so convinced, Alfred, that it would be for your sister's happiness. There really is no harm whatever in aiding her inexperience;

that is all that I wish to do. I'm sure you understand me?'

'I understand well enough,' returned the young man; 'but if you convince Adela against her will you'll do a clever thing. You've been so remarkably successful in closing her mind against all arguments of reason——'

'Now, Alfred, do not begin and talk in that way! It has nothing whatever to do with the matter. This is entirely a personal question.'

'Nothing of the kind. It's a question of religious prejudice. She hates Mutimer because he doesn't go to church, there's the long and short of it.'

'Adela very properly condemns his views, but that's quite a different thing from hating him.'

'Oh dear, no; they're one and the same thing. Look at the history of persecution. She would like to see him—and me too, I dare say—brought to the stake.'

'Well, well, of course if you won't talk sensibly! I had something to propose.'

'Let me hear it, then.'

'You yourself agree with me that there would be nothing to repent in urging her.'

'On the contrary, I think she might consider herself precious lucky. It's only that'—he looked dubious for a moment—'I'm not quite sure whether she's the kind of girl to be

content with a husband she found she couldn't convert. I can imagine her marrying a rake on the hope of bringing him to regular church-going, but then Mutimer doesn't happen to be a blackguard, so he isn't very interesting to her.'

'I know what you're thinking of, but I don't think we need take that into account. And, indeed, we can't afford to take anything into account but her establishment in a respectable and happy home. Our choice, as you are aware, is not a wide one. I am often deeply anxious about the poor girl.'

'I dare say. Well, what was your proposal?'

'Do you think Letty could help us?'

'H'm, can't say. Might or might not. She's as bad as Adela. Ten to one it'll be a point of conscience with her to fight the project tooth and nail.'

'I don't think so. She has accepted you.'

'So she has, to my amazement. Women are monstrously illogical. She must think of my latter end with mixed feelings.'

'I do wish you were less flippant in dealing with grave subjects, Alfred. I assure you I am very much troubled. I feel that so much is at stake, and yet the responsibility of doing anything is so very great.'

'Shall I talk it over with Letty?'

'If you feel able to. But Adela would be

very seriously offended if she guessed that you had done so.'

'Then she mustn't guess, that's all. I'll see what I can do to-night.'

In the home of the Tews there was some difficulty in securing privacy. The house was a small one, and the sacrifice of general convenience when Letty wanted a whole room for herself and Alfred was considerable. To-night it was managed, however; the front parlour was granted to the pair for one hour.

It could not be said that there was much delicacy in Alfred's way of approaching the subject he wished to speak of. This young man had a scorn of periphrases. If a topic had to be handled, why not be succinct in the handling? Alfred was of opinion that much time was lost by mortals in windy talk.

'Look here, Letty: what's your idea about Adela marrying Mutimer?'

The girl looked startled.

'She has not accepted him?'

'Not yet. Don't you think it would be a good thing if she did?'

'I really can't say,' Letty replied very gravely, her head aside. 'I don't think any one can judge but Adela herself. Really, Alfred, I don't think we ought to interfere.'

'But suppose I ask you to try and get her to see the affair sensibly?'

'Sensibly? What a word to use!'

'The right word, I think.'

'What a vexatious boy you are! You don't really think so at all. You only speak so because you like to tease me.'

'Well, you certainly do look pretty when you're defending the castles in the air. Give me a kiss.'

'Indeed I shall not. Tell me seriously what you mean. What does Mrs. Waltham think about it?'

'Give me a kiss, and I'll tell you. If not, I'll go away and leave you to find out everything as best you can.'

'Oh, Alfred, you're a sad tyrant!'

'Of course I am. But it's a benevolent despotism. Well, mother wants Adela to accept him. In fact, she asked me if I didn't think you'd help us. Of course I said you would.'

'Then you were very hasty. I'm not joking now, Alfred. I think of Adela in a way you very likely can't understand. It would be shocking, oh! shocking, to try and make her marry him if she doesn't really wish to.'

'No fear! We shan't manage that.'

'And surely wouldn't wish to?'

'I don't know. Girls often can't see what's best for them. I say, you understand that all this is in confidence?'

'Of course I do. But it's a confidence I had

rather not have received. I shall be miserable, I know that.'

'Then you're a little—goose.'

'You were going to call me something far worse.'

'Give me credit, then, for correcting myself. You'll have to help us, Lettycoco.'

The girl kept silence. Then for a time the conversation became graver. It was interrupted precisely at the end of the granted hour.

Letty went to see her friend on Sunday afternoon, and the two shut themselves up in the dainty little chamber. Adela was in low spirits; with her a most unusual state. She sat with her hands crossed on her lap, and the sunny light of her eyes was dimmed. When she had tried for a while to talk of ordinary things, Letty saw a tear glisten upon her cheek.

'What is the matter, love?'

Adela was in sore need of telling her troubles, and Letty was the only one to whom she could do so. In such spirit-gentle words as could express the perplexities of her mind she told what a source of pain her mother's conversation had been to her of late, and how she dreaded what might still be to come.

'It is so dreadful to think, Letty, that mother is encouraging him. She thinks it is for my happiness; she is offended if I try to say what I suffer. Oh, I couldn't! I couldn't!'

She put her palms before her face; her maidenhood shamed to speak of these things even to her bosom friend.

'Can't you show him, darling, that—that he mustn't hope anything?'

'How can I do so? It is impossible to be rude, and everything else it is so easy to misunderstand.'

'But when he really speaks, then it will come to an end.'

'I shall grieve mother so, Letty. I feel as if the best of my life had gone by. Everything seemed so smooth. Oh, why did he fall so, Letty? and I thought he cared for me, dear.'

She whispered it, her face on her friend's shoulder.

'Try to forget, darling; try!'

'Oh, as if I didn't try night and day! I know it is so wrong to give a thought. How could he speak to me as he did that day when I met him on the hill, and again when I went just to save him an annoyance? He was almost the same as before, only I thought him a little sad from his illness. He had no right to talk to me in that way! Oh, I feel wicked, that I can't forget; I hate myself for still—for still——'

There was a word Letty could not hear, only her listening heart divined it.

'Dear Adela! pray for strength, and it will

be sure to come to you. How hard it is to know myself so happy when you have so much trouble!'

'I could have borne it better but for this new pain. I don't think I should ever have shown it; even you wouldn't have known all I felt, Letty. I should have hoped for him—I don't mean hoped on my own account, but that he might know how wicked he had been. How—how can a man do things so unworthy of himself, when it's so beautiful to be good and faithful? I think he did care a little for me once, Letty.'

'Don't let us talk of him, pet.'

'You are right; we mustn't. His name ought never to pass my lips, only in my prayers.'

She grew calmer, and they sat hand in hand.

'Try to make your mother understand,' advised Letty. 'Say that it is impossible you should ever accept him.'

'She won't believe that, I'm sure she won't. And to think that, even if I did it only to please her, people would believe I had married him because he is rich!'

Letty spoke with more emphasis than hitherto.

'But you cannot and must not do such a thing to please any one, Adela! It is wrong even to think of it. Nothing, nothing can justify that.'

How strong she was in the purity of her own love, good little Letty! So they talked together, and mingled their tears, and the room was made a sacred place as by the presence of sorrowing angels.

CHAPTER XII.

THE New Wanley Lecture Hall had been publicly dedicated to the service of the New Wanley Commonwealth, and only in one respect did the day's proceedings fall short of Mutimer's expectations. He had hoped to have all the Waltham family at his luncheon party, but in the event Alfred alone felt himself able to accept the invitation. Mutimer had even nourished the hope that something might happen before that day to allow of Adela's appearing not merely in the character of a guest, but, as it were, *ex officio*. By this time he had resolutely forbidden his eyes to stray to the right hand or the left, and kept them directed with hungry, relentless steadiness straight along the path of his desires. He had received no second letter from his mother, nor had Alice anything to report of danger-signals at home; from Emma herself came a letter regularly once a week, a letter of perfect patience, chiefly concerned with her sister's health. He had made

up his mind to declare nothing till the irretrievable step was taken, when reproaches only could befall him; to Alice as little as to any one else had he breathed of his purposes. And he could no longer even take into account the uncertainty of his success; to doubt of that would have been insufferable at the point which he had reached in self-abandonment. Yet day after day saw the postponement of the question which would decide his fate. Between him and Mrs. Waltham the language of allusion was at length put aside; he spoke plainly of his wishes, and sought her encouragement. This was not wanting, but the mother begged for time. Let the day of the ceremony come and go.

Richard passed through it in a state of exaltation and anxiety which bordered on fever. Mr. Westlake and his wife came down from London by an early train, and he went over New Wanley with them before luncheon. The luncheon itself did not lack festive vivacity; Richard, in surveying his guests from the head of the board, had feelings not unlike those wherein King Polycrates lulled himself of old; there wanted, in truth, one thing to complete his self-complacence, but an extra glass or two of wine enrubied his imagination, and he already saw Adela's face smiling to him from the table's unoccupied end. What was such conquest in

comparison with that which Fate had accorded him?

There was a satisfactory gathering to hear Mr. Westlake's address; Richard did not fail to note the presence of a few reporters, only it seemed to him that their pencils might have been more active. Here, too, was Adela at length; every time his name was uttered, perforce she heard; every encomium bestowed upon him by the various speakers was to him like a new bud on the tree of hope. After all, why should he feel this humility towards her? What man of prominence, of merit, at all like his own would ever seek her hand? The semblance of chivalry which occasionally stirred within him was, in fact, quite inconsistent with his reasoned view of things; the English working class has, on the whole, as little of that quality as any other people in an elementary stage of civilisation. He was a man, she a woman. A lady, to be sure, but then——

After Mutimer, Alfred Waltham had probably more genuine satisfaction in the ceremony than any one else present. Mr. Westlake he was not quite satisfied with; there was a mildness and restraint about the style of the address which to Alfred's taste smacked of feebleness; he was for Cambyses' vein. Still it rejoiced him to hear the noble truths of democracy delivered as it were from the bema. To a cer-

tain order of intellect the word addressed by the living voice to an attentive assembly is always vastly impressive; when the word coincides with private sentiment it excites enthusiasm. Alfred hated the aristocratic order of things with a rabid hatred. In practice he could be as coarsely overbearing with his social inferiors as that scion of the nobility—existing of course somewhere—who bears the bell for feebleness of the pia mater; but that made him none the less a sound Radical. In thinking of the upper classes he always thought of Hubert Eldon, and that name was scarlet to him. Never trust the thoroughness of the man who is a revolutionist on abstract principles; personal feeling alone goes to the root of the matter.

Many were the gentlemen to whom Alfred had the happiness of being introduced in the course of the day. Among others was Mr. Keene the journalist. At the end of a lively conversation Mr. Keene brought out a copy of the *Belwick Chronicle,* that day's issue.

'You'll find a few things of mine here,' he said. 'Put it in your pocket, and look at it afterwards. By-the-by, there is a paragraph marked; I meant it for Mutimer. Never mind, give it him when you've done with it.'

Alfred bestowed the paper in the breast pocket of his great-coat, and did not happen to think of

it again till late that evening. His discovery of it at length was not the only event of the day which came just too late for the happiness of one with whose fortunes we are concerned.

A little after dark, when the bell was ringing which summoned Mutimer's workpeople to the tea provided for them, Hubert Eldon was approaching the village by the road from Agworth: he was on foot, and had chosen his time in order to enter Wanley unnoticed. His former visit, when he was refused at the Walthams' door, had been paid at an impulse; he had come down from London by an early train, and did not even call to see his mother at her new house in Agworth. Nor did he visit her on his way back; he walked straight to the railway station and took the first train townwards. To-day he came in a more leisurely way. It was certain news contained in a letter from his mother which brought him, and with her he spent some hours before starting to walk towards Wanley.

'I hear,' Mrs. Eldon had written, 'from Wanley something which really surprises me. They say that Adela Waltham is going to marry Mr. Mutimer. The match is surely a very strange one. I am only fearful that it is the making of interested people, and that the poor girl herself has not had much voice in deciding her

own fate. Oh, this money! Adela was worthy of better things.'

Mrs. Eldon saw her son with surprise, the more so that she divined the cause of his coming. When they had talked for a while, Hubert frankly admitted what it was that had brought him.

'I must know,' he said, 'whether the news from Wanley is true.'

'But can it concern you, Hubert?' his mother asked gently.

He made no direct reply, but expressed his intention of going over to Wanley.

'Whom shall you visit, dear?'

'Mr. Wyvern.'

'The vicar? But you don't know him personally.'

'Yes, I know him pretty well. We write to each other occasionally.'

Mrs. Eldon always practised most reserve when her surprise was greatest—an excellent rule, by-the-by, for general observation. She looked at her son with a half-smile of wonder, but only said 'Indeed?'

'I had made his acquaintance before his coming to Wanley,' Hubert explained.

His mother just bent her head, acquiescent. And with that their conversation on the subject ended. But Hubert received a tender kiss on his cheek when he set forth in the afternoon.

To one entering the valley after nightfall the situation of the much-discussed New Wanley could no longer be a source of doubt. Two blast-furnaces sent up their flare and lit luridly the devastated scene. Having glanced in that direction Hubert did his best to keep his eyes averted during the remainder of the walk. He was surprised to see a short passenger train rush by on the private line connecting the works with Agworth station; it was taking away certain visitors who had lingered in New Wanley after the lecture. Knowing nothing of the circumstances, he supposed that general traffic had been commenced. He avoided the village street, and reached the Vicarage by a path through fields.

He found the vicar at dinner, though it was only half-past six. The welcome he received was, in Mr. Wyvern's manner, almost silent; but when he had taken a place at the table he saw satisfaction on his host's face. The meal was very plain, but the vicar ate with extraordinary appetite; he was one of those men in whom the demands of the stomach seem to be in direct proportion to the activity of the brain. A question Hubert put about the train led to a brief account of what was going on. Mr. Wyvern spoke on the subject with a gravity which was not distinctly ironical, but suggested criticism.

They repaired to the study. A volume of Plato was open on the reading-table.

'Do you remember Socrates' prayer in the "Phædrus"?' said the vicar, bending affectionately over the page. He read a few words of the Greek, then gave a free rendering. 'Beloved Pan, and all ye other gods who haunt this place, give me beauty in the inward soul; and may the outward and inward be at one. May I esteem the wise alone wealthy, and may I have such abundance of wealth as none but the temperate can carry.'

He paused a moment.

'Ah, when I came hither I hoped to find Pan undisturbed. Well, well, after all, Hephæstus was one of the gods.'

'How I envy you your quiet mind!' said Hubert.

'Quiet? Nay, not always so. Just now I am far from at peace. What brings you hither to-day?'

The equivoque was obviated by Mr. Wyvern's tone.

'I have heard stories about Adela Waltham. Is there any truth in them?'

'I fear so; I fear so.'

'That she is really going to marry Mr. Mutimer?'

He tried to speak the name without discourtesy, but his lips writhed after it.

'I fear she is going to marry him,' said the vicar deliberately.

Hubert held his peace.

'It troubles me. It angers me,' said Mr. Wyvern. 'I am angry with more than one.'

'Is there an engagement?'

'I am unable to say. Tattle generally gets ahead of fact.'

'It is monstrous!' burst from the young man. 'They are taking advantage of her innocence. She is a child. Why do they educate girls like that? I should say, how can they leave them so uneducated? In an ideal world it would be all very well, but see what comes of it here? She is walking with her eyes open into horrors and curses, and understands as little of what awaits her as a lamb led to butchery. Do you stand by and say nothing?'

'It surprises me that you are so affected,' remarked the vicar quietly.

'No doubt. I can't reason about it. But I know that my life will be hideous if this goes on to the end.'

'You are late.'

'Yes, I am late. I was in Wanley some weeks ago; I did not tell you of it. I called at their house; they were not at home to me. Yet Adela was sitting at the window. What did that mean? Is her mother so contemptible

that my change of fortune leads her to treat me in that way?'

'But does no other reason occur to you?' asked Mr. Wyvern, with grave surprise.

'Other reason! What other?'

'You must remember that gossip is active.'

'You mean that they have heard about—?'

'Somehow it had become the common talk of the village very shortly after my arrival here.'

Hubert dropped his eyes in bewilderment.

'Then they think me unfit to associate with them? She—Adela—will look upon me as a vile creature! But it wasn't so when I saw her immediately after my illness. She talked freely and with just the same friendliness as before.'

'Probably she had heard nothing then.'

'And her mother only began to poison her mind when it was advantageous to do so?'

Hubert laughed bitterly.

'Well, there is an end of it,' he pursued. 'Yes, I was forgetting all that. Oh, it is quite intelligible; I don't blame them. By all means let her be preserved from contagion! Pooh! I don't know my own mind. Old fancies that I used to have somehow got hold of me again. If I ever marry, it must be a woman of the world, a woman with brain and heart to judge

human nature. It is gone, as if I had never had such a thought. Poor child, to be sure; but that's all one can say.'

His tone was as far from petulance as could be. Hubert's emotions were never feebly coloured; his nature ran into extremes, and vehemence of scorn was in him the true voice of injured tenderness. Of humility he knew but little, least of all where his affections were concerned, but there was the ring of noble metal in his self-assertion. He would never consciously act or speak a falsehood, and was intolerant of the lies, petty or great, which conventionality and warped habits of thought encourage in those of weaker personality.

'Let us be just,' remarked Mr. Wyvern, his voice sounding rather sepulchral after the outburst of youthful passion. 'Mrs. Waltham's point of view is not inconceivable. I, as you know, am not altogether a man of formulas, but I am not sure that my behaviour would greatly differ from hers in her position; I mean as regards yourself.'

'Yes, yes; I admit the reasonableness of it,' said Hubert more calmly, 'granted that you have to deal with children. But Adela is too old to have no will or understanding. It may be she has both. After all she would scarcely allow herself to be forced into a detestable

marriage. Very likely she takes her mother's practical views.'

'There is such a thing as blank indifference in a young girl who has suffered disappointment.'

'I could do nothing,' exclaimed Hubert. 'That she thinks of me at all, or has ever seriously done so, is the merest supposition. There was nothing binding between us. If she is false to herself, experience and suffering must teach her.'

The vicar mused.

'Then you go your way untroubled?' was his next question.

'If I am strong enough to overcome foolishness.'

'And if foolishness persists in asserting itself?'

Hubert kept gloomy silence.

'Thus much I can say to you of my own knowledge,' observed Mr. Wyvern with weight. 'Miss Waltham is not one to speak words lightly. You call her a child, and no doubt her view of the world is childlike; but she is strong in her simplicity. A pledge from her will, or I am much mistaken, bear no two meanings. Her marriage with Mr. Mutimer would be as little pleasing to me as to you, but I cannot see that I have any claim to interpose,

or, indeed, power to do so. Is it not the same with yourself?'

'No, not quite the same.'

'Then you have hope that you might still affect her destiny?'

Hubert did not answer.

'Do you measure the responsibility you would incur? I fear not, if you have spoken sincerely. Your experience has not been of a kind to aid you in understanding her, and, I warn you, to make her subject to your caprices would be little short of a crime, whether now —heed me—or hereafter.'

'Perhaps it is too late,' murmured Hubert.

'That may well be, in more senses than one.'

'Can you not discover whether she is really engaged?'

'If that were the case, I think I should have heard of it.'

'If I were allowed to see her! So much at least should be granted me. I should not poison the air she breathes.'

'Do you return to Agworth to-night?' Mr. Wyvern inquired.

'Yes, I shall walk back.'

'Can you come to me again to-morrow evening?'

It was agreed that Hubert should do so. Mr. Wyvern gave no definite promise of aid,

but the young man felt that he would do something.

'The night is fine,' said the vicar; 'I will walk half a mile with you.'

They left the Vicarage, and ten yards from the door turned into the path which would enable them to avoid the village street. Not two minutes after their quitting the main road the spot was passed by Adela herself, who was walking towards Mr. Wyvern's dwelling. On her inquiring for the vicar, she learnt from the servant that he had just left home. She hesitated, and seemed about to ask further questions or leave a message, but at length turned away from the door and retraced her steps, slowly and with bent head.

She knew not whether to feel glad or sorry that the interview she had come to seek could not immediately take place. This day had been a hard one for Adela. In the morning her mother had spoken to her without disguise or affectation, and had told her of Mutimer's indirect proposal. Mrs. Waltham went on to assure her that there was no hurry, that Mutimer had consented to refrain from visits for a short time in order that she might take counsel with herself, and that—the mother's voice trembled on the words—absolute freedom was of course left her to accept or refuse. But Mrs. Waltham could not pause there, though

she tried to. She went on to speak of the day's proceedings.

'Think what we may, my dear, of Mr. Mutimer's opinions, no one can deny that he is making a most unselfish use of his wealth. We shall have an opportunity to-day of hearing how it is regarded by those who—who understand such questions.'

Adela implored to be allowed to remain at home instead of attending the lecture, but on this point Mrs. Waltham was inflexible. The girl could not offer resolute opposition in a matter which only involved an hour or two's endurance. She sat in pale silence. Then her mother broke into tears, bewailed herself as a luckless being, entreated her daughter's pardon, but in the end was perfectly ready to accept Adela's self-sacrifice.

On her return from New Wanley, Adela sat alone till tea-time, and after that meal again went to her room. She was not one of those girls to whom tears come as a matter of course on any occasion of annoyance or of grief; her bright eyes had seldom been dimmed since childhood, for the lightsomeness of her character threw off trifling troubles almost as soon as they were felt, and of graver afflictions she had hitherto known none since her father's death. But since the shock she received on that day when her mother revealed Hubert Eldon's

unworthiness, her emotional life had suffered a slow change. Evil, previously known but as a dark mystery shadowing far-off regions, had become the constant preoccupation of her thoughts. Drawing analogies from the story of her faith, she imaged Hubert as the angel who fell from supreme purity to a terrible lordship of perdition. Of his sins she had the dimmest conception; she was told that they were sins of impurity, and her understanding of such could scarcely have been expressed save in the general language of her prayers. Guarded jealously at every moment of her life, the world had made no blur on the fair tablet of her mind; her Eden had suffered no invasion. She could only repeat to herself that her heart had gone dreadfully astray in its fondness, and that, whatsoever it cost her, the old hopes, the strength of which was only now proved, must be utterly uprooted. And knowing that, she wept.

Sin was too surely sorrow, though it neared her only in imagination. In a few weeks she seemed to have almost outgrown girlhood; her steps were measured, her smile was seldom and lacked mirth. The revelation would have done so much; the added and growing trouble of Mutimer's attentions threatened to sink her in melancholy. She would not allow it to be seen more than she could help; cheerful activity

in the life of home was one of her moral duties, and she strove hard to sustain it. It was a relief to find herself alone each night, alone with her sickness of heart.

The repugnance aroused in her by the thought of becoming Mutimer's wife was rather instinctive than reasoned. From one point of view, indeed, she deemed it wrong, since it might be entirely the fruit of the love she was forbidden to cherish. Striving to read her conscience, which for years had been with her a daily task and was now become the anguish of every hour, she found it hard to establish valid reasons for steadfastly refusing a man who was her mother's choice. She read over the marriage service frequently. There stood the promise —to love, to honour, and to obey. Honour and obedience she might render him, but what of love? The question arose, what did love mean? Could there be such a thing as love of an unworthy object? Was she not led astray by the spirit of perverseness which was her heritage?

Adela could not bring herself to believe that 'to love' in the sense of the marriage service and to 'be in love' as her heart understood it were one and the same thing. The Puritanism of her training led her to distrust profoundly those impulses of mere nature. And the circumstances of her own unhappy affection tended

to confirm her in this way of thinking. Letty Tew certainly thought otherwise, but was not Letty's own heart too exclusively occupied by worldly considerations?

Yet it said 'love.' Perchance that was something which would come after marriage; the promise, observe, concerned the future. But she was not merely indifferent; she shrank from Mutimer.

She returned home from the lecture to-day full of dread—dread more active than she had yet known. And it drove her to a step she had timidly contemplated for more than a week. She stole from the house, bent on seeing Mr. Wyvern. She could not confess to him, but she could speak of the conflict between her mother's will and her own, and beg his advice; perhaps, if he appeared favourable, ask him to intercede with her mother. She had liked Mr. Wyvern from the first meeting with him, and a sense of trust had been nourished by each succeeding conversation. In her agitation she thought it would not be hard to tell him so much of the circumstances as would enable him to judge and counsel.

Yet it was with relief, on the whole, that she turned homewards with her object unattained. It would be much better to wait and test herself yet further. Why should she not speak with

her mother about that vow she was asked to make?

She did not seek solitude again, but joined her mother and Alfred in the sitting-room. Mrs. Waltham made no inquiry about the short absence. Alfred had only just called to mind the newspaper which Mr. Keene had given him, and was unfolding it for perusal. His eye caught a marked paragraph, one of a number under the heading 'Gossip from Town.' As he read it he uttered a 'Hullo!' of surprise.

'Well, here's the latest,' he continued, looking at his companions with an amused eye. 'Something about that fellow Eldon in a Belwick newspaper. What do you think?'

Adela kept still and mute.

'Whatever it is, it cannot interest us, Alfred,' said Mrs. Waltham, with dignity. 'We had rather not hear it.'

'Well, you shall read it for yourself,' replied Alfred on a second thought. 'I think you'd like to know.'

His mother took the paper under protest, and glanced down at the paragraph carelessly. But speedily her attention became closer.

'An item of intelligence,' wrote the London gossiper, 'which I dare say will interest readers in certain parts of —shire. A lady of French extraction who made a name for herself at a

leading metropolitan theatre last winter, and who really promises great things in the Thespian art, is back among us from a sojourn on the Continent. She is understood to have spent much labour in the study of a new part, which she is about to introduce to us of the modern Babylon. But Albion, it is whispered, possesses other attractions for her besides appreciative audiences. In brief, though she will of course appear under the old name, she will in reality have changed it for one of another nationality before presenting herself in the radiance of the footlights. The happy man is Mr. Hubert Eldon, late of Wanley Manor. We felicitate Mr. Eldon.'

Mrs. Waltham's hands trembled as she doubled the sheet: there was a gleam of pleasure on her face.

'Give me the paper when you have done with it,' she said.

Alfred laughed, and whistled a tune as he continued the perusal of Mr. Keene's political and social intelligence, on the whole as trustworthy as the style in which it was written was terse and elegant. Adela, finding she could feign indifference no longer, went from the room.

'Where did you get this?' Mrs. Waltham asked with eagerness as soon as the girl was gone.

'From the writer himself,' Alfred replied, visibly proud of his intimacy with a man of letters. 'Fellow called Keene. Had a long talk with him.'

'About this?'

'Oh, no. I've only just come across it. But he said he'd marked something for Mutimer. I'm to pass the paper on to him.'

'I suppose this is the same woman——?'

'No doubt.'

'You think it's true?'

'True? Why, of course it is. A newspaper with a reputation to support can't go printing people's names at haphazard. Keene's very thick with all the London actors. He told me some first-class stories about——'

'Never mind,' interposed his mother. 'Well, to think it should come to this! I'm sure I feel for poor Mrs. Eldon. Really, there is no end to her misfortunes.'

'Just how such families always end up,' observed Alfred complacently. 'No doubt he'll drink himself to death, or something of that kind, and then we shall have the pleasure of seeing a new tablet in the church, inscribed with manifold virtues; or even a stained-glass window: the last of the Eldons deserves something noteworthy.'

'I think it's hardly a subject for joking, Alfred. It is very, very sad. And to think

what a fine handsome boy he used to be! But he was always dreadfully self-willed.'

'He was always an impertinent puppy! How he'll play the swell on his wife's earnings! Oh, our glorious aristocracy!'

Mrs. Waltham went early to her daughter's room. Adela was sitting with her Bible before her—had sat so since coming upstairs, yet had not read three consecutive verses. Her face showed no effect of tears, for the heat of a consuming suspense had dried the fountains of woe.

'I don't like to occupy your mind with such things, my dear,' began her mother, 'but perhaps as a warning I ought to show you the news Alfred spoke of. It pleases Providence that there should be evil in the world, and for our own safety we must sometimes look it in the face, especially we poor women, Adela. Will you read that?'

Adela read. She could not criticise the style, but it affected her as something unclean; Hubert's very name suffered degradation when used in such a way. Prepared for worse things than that which she saw, no shock of feelings was manifest in her. She returned the paper without speaking.

'I wanted you to see that my behaviour to Mr. Eldon was not unjustified,' said her mother. 'You don't blame me any longer, dear?'

'I have never blamed you, mother.'

'It is a sad, sad end to what might have been a life of usefulness and honour. I have thought so often of the parable of the talents; only I fear this case is worse. His poor mother! I wonder if I could write to her! Yet I hardly know how to.'

'Is this a—a wicked woman, mother?' Adela asked falteringly.

Mrs. Waltham shook her head and sighed.

'My love, don't you see that she is an actress?'

'But if all actresses are wicked, how is it that really good people go to the theatre?'

'I am afraid they oughtn't to. The best of us are tempted into thoughtless pleasure. But now I don't want you to brood over things which it is a sad necessity to have to glance at. Read your chapter, darling, and get to bed.'

To bed—but not to sleep. The child's imagination was aflame. This scarlet woman, this meteor from hell flashing before the delighted eyes of men, she, then, had bound Hubert for ever in her toils; no release for him now, no ransom to eternity. No instant's doubt of the news came to Adela; in her eyes *imprimatur* was the guarantee of truth. She strove to picture the face which had drawn Hubert to his doom. It must be lovely beyond compare. For the

first time in her life she knew the agonies of jealousy.

She could not shed tears, but in her anguish she fell upon prayer, spoke the words above her breath that they might silence that terrible voice within. Poor lost lamb, crying in the darkness, sending forth such piteous utterance as might create a spirit of love to hear and rescue.

Rescue—none. When the fire wasted itself, she tried to find solace in the thought that one source of misery was stopped. Hubert was married, or would be very soon, and if she had sinned in loving him till now, such sin would henceforth be multiplied incalculably; she durst not, as she valued her soul, so much as let his name enter her thoughts. And to guard against it, was there not a means offered her? The doubt as to what love meant was well nigh solved; or at all events she held it proved that the 'love' of the marriage service was something she had never yet felt, something which would follow upon marriage itself. Earthly love had surely led Hubert Eldon to ruin; oh, not that could be demanded of her! What reason had she now to offer against her mother's desire? Letty's arguments were vain; they were but as the undisciplined motions of her own heart. Marriage with a worthy man must often have been salvation to a rudderless

life; for was it not the *ceremony* which, after all, constituted the exclusive sanction?

Mutimer, it was true, fell sadly short of her ideal of goodness. He was an unbeliever. But might not this very circumstance involve a duty? As his wife, could she not plead with him and bring him to the truth? Would not that be *loving* him, to make his spiritual good the end of her existence? It was as though a great light shot athwart her darkness. She raised herself in bed, and, as if with her very hands, clung to the inspiration which had been granted her. The light was not abiding, but something of radiance lingered, and that must stead her.

Her brother returned to Belwick next morning after an early breakfast. He was in his wonted high spirits, and talked with much satisfaction of the acquaintances he had made on the previous day, while Adela waited upon him. Mrs. Waltham only appeared as he was setting off.

Adela sat almost in silence whilst her mother breakfasted.

'You don't look well, dear?' said the latter, coming to the little room upstairs soon after the meal.

'Yes, I am well, mother. But I want to speak to you.'

Mrs. Waltham seated herself in expectation.

'Will you tell me why you so much wish me to marry Mr. Mutimer?'

Adela's tone was quite other than she had hitherto used in conversations of this kind. It was submissive, patiently questioning.

'You mustn't misunderstand me,' replied the mother with some nervousness. 'The wish, dear, must of course be yours as well. You know that I—that I really have left you to consult your own——'

The sentence was unfinished.

'But you have tried to persuade me, mother dear,' pursued the gentle voice. 'You would not do so if you did not think it for my good.'

Something shot painfully through Mrs. Waltham's heart.

'I am sure I have thought so, Adela; really I have thought so. I know there are objections, but no marriage is in every way perfect I feel so sure of his character—I mean of his character in a worldly sense. And you might do so much to—to show him the true way, might you not, darling? I'm sure his heart is good.'

Mrs. Waltham also was speaking with less confidence than on former occasions. She cast side glances at her daughter's colourless face.

'Mother, may I marry without feeling that —that I love him?'

The face was flushed now for a moment. Adela had never spoken that word to anyone; even to Letty she had scarcely murmured it. The effect upon her of hearing it from her own lips was mysterious, awful; the sound did not die with her voice, but trembled in subtle harmonies along the chords of her being.

Her mother took the shaken form and drew it to her bosom.

'If he is your husband, darling, you will find that love grows. It is always so. Have no fear. On his side there is not only love: he respects you deeply; he has told me so.'

'And you encourage me to accept him, mother? It is your desire? I am your child, and you can wish nothing that is not for my good. Guide me, mother. It is so hard to judge for myself. You shall decide for me, indeed you shall.'

The mother's heart was wrung. For a moment she strove to speak the very truth, to utter a word about that love which Adela was resolutely excluding. But the temptation to accept this unhoped surrender proved too strong. She sobbed her answer.

'Yes, I do wish it, Adela. You will find that I—that I was not wrong.'

'Then if he asks me, I will marry him.'

As those words were spoken Mutimer issued from the Manor gates, uncertain whether

to go his usual way down to the works or to pay a visit to Mrs. Waltham. The latter purpose prevailed.

The evening before, Mr. Willis Rodman had called at the Manor shortly after dinner. He found Mutimer smoking, with coffee at his side, and was speedily making himself comfortable in the same way. Then he drew a newspaper from his pocket.

'Have you seen the *Belwick Chronicle* of to-day?' he inquired.

'Why the deuce should I read such a paper?' exclaimed Richard with good-humoured surprise. He was in excellent spirits to-night, the excitement of the day having swept his mind clear of anxieties.

'There's something in it, though, that you ought to see.'

He pointed out the paragraph relating to Eldon.

'Keene's writing, eh?' said Mutimer thoughtfully.

'Yes, he gave me the paper.'

Richard rekindled his cigar with deliberation, and stood for a few moments with one foot on the fender.

'Who is the woman?' he then asked.

'I don't know her name. Of course it's the same story continued.'

'And concluded.'

'Well, I don't know about that,' said the other, smiling and shaking his head.

'This may or may not be true, I suppose,' was Richard's next remark.

'Oh, I suppose the man hears all that kind of thing. I don't see any reason to doubt it.'

'May I keep the paper?'

'Oh, yes. Keene told me, by-the-by, that he gave a copy to young Waltham.'

Mr. Rodman spoke whilst rolling the cigar in his mouth. Mutimer allowed the subject to lapse.

There was no impossibility, no improbability even, in the statement made by the newspaper correspondent; yet, as Richard thought it over in the night, he could not but regard it as singular that Mr. Keene should be the man to make public such a piece of information so very opportunely. He was far from having admitted the man to his confidence, but between Keene and Rodman, as he was aware, an intimacy had sprung up. It might be that one or the other had thought it worth while to serve him; why should Keene be particular to put a copy of the paper into Alfred Waltham's hands? Well, he personally knew nothing of the affair. If the news effected anything, so much the better. He hoped it might be trustworthy.

Among his correspondence in the morning

was a letter from Emma Vine. He opened it last; anyone observing him would have seen with what reluctance he began to read it.

'My dear Richard,' it ran, 'I write to thank you for the money. I would very much rather have had a letter from you, however short a one. It seems long since you wrote a real letter, and I can't think how long since I have seen you. But I know how full of business you are, dear, and I'm sure you would never come to London without telling me, because if you hadn't time to come here, I should be only too glad to go to Highbury, if only for one word. We have got some mourning dresses to make for the servants of a lady in Islington, so that is good news. But poor Jane is very bad indeed. She suffers a great deal of pain, and most of all at night, so that she scarcely ever gets more than half-an-hour of sleep at a time, if that. What makes it worse, dear Richard, is that she is so very unhappy. Sometimes she cries nearly through the whole night. I try my best to keep her up, but I'm afraid her weakness has much to do with it. But Kate is very well, I am glad to say, and the children are very well too. Bertie is beginning to learn to read. He often says he would like to see you. Thank you, dearest, for the money and all your kind-

ness, and believe that I shall think of you every minute with much love. From yours ever and ever,

'EMMA VINE.'

It would be cruel to reproduce Emma's errors of spelling. Richard had sometimes noted a bad instance with annoyance, but it was not that which made him hurry to the end this morning with lowered brows. When he had finished the letter he crumpled it up and threw it into the fire. It was not heartlessness that made him do so: he dreaded to have these letters brought before his eyes a second time.

He was also throwing the envelope aside, when he discovered that it contained yet another slip of paper. The writing on this was not Emma's: the letters were cramped and not easy to decipher.

'Dear Richard, come to London and see me. I want to speak to you, I must speak to you. I can't have very long to live, and I *must*, *must* see you.

'JANE VINE.'

This too he threw into the fire. His lips were hard set, his eyes wide. And almost immediately he prepared to leave the house.

It was early, but he felt that he must go to the Walthams'. He had promised Mrs. Waltham to refrain from visiting the house for a week, but that promise it was impossible to keep. Jane's words were ringing in his ears: he seemed to hear her very voice calling and beseeching. So far from changing his purpose, it impelled him in the course he had chosen. There must and should be an end of this suspense.

Mrs. Waltham had just come downstairs from her conversation with Adela, when she saw Mutimer approaching the door. She admitted him herself. Surely Providence was on her side; she felt almost young in her satisfaction.

Richard remained in the house about twenty minutes. Then he walked down to the works as usual.

Shortly after his departure another visitor presented himself. This was Mr. Wyvern. The vicar's walk in Hubert's company the evening before had extended itself from point to point, till the two reached Agworth together. Mr. Wyvern was addicted to night-rambling, and he often covered considerable stretches of country in the hours when other mortals slept. To-night he was in the mood for such exercise; it worked off unwholesome accumulations of thought and feeling, and good counsel often

came to him in what the Greeks called the kindly time. He did not hurry on his way back to Wanley, for just at present he was much in need of calm reflection.

On his arrival at the Vicarage about eleven o'clock the servant informed him of Miss Waltham's having called. Mr. Wyvern heard this with pleasure. He thought at first of writing a note to Adela, begging her to come to the Vicarage again, but by the morning he had decided to be himself the visitor.

He gathered at once from Mrs. Waltham's face that events of some agitating kind were in progress. She did not keep him long in uncertainty. Upon his asking if he might speak a few words with Adela, Mrs. Waltham examined him curiously.

'I am afraid,' she said, 'that I must ask you to excuse her this morning, Mr. Wyvern. She is not quite prepared to see anyone at present. In fact,' she lowered her voice and smiled very graciously, 'she has just had an—an agitating interview with Mr. Mutimer—she has consented to be his wife.'

'In that case I cannot of course trouble her,' the vicar replied, with gravity which to Mrs. Waltham appeared excessive, rather adapted to news of a death than of a betrothal. The dark searching eyes, too, made her feel uncomfortable. And he did not utter a

syllable of the politeness expected on these occasions.

'What a very shocking thing about Mr. Eldon!' the lady pursued. 'You have heard?'

'Shocking? Pray, what has happened?'

Hubert had left him in some depression the night before, and for a moment Mr. Wyvern dreaded lest some fatality had become known in Wanley.

'Ah, you have not heard? It is in this newspaper.'

The vicar examined the column indicated.

'But,' he exclaimed, with subdued indignation, 'this is the merest falsehood!'

'A falsehood! Are you sure of that, Mr. Wyvern?'

'Perfectly sure. There is no foundation or it whatsoever.'

'You don't say so! I am very glad to hear that, for poor Mrs. Eldon's sake.'

'Could you lend me this newspaper for to-day?'

'With pleasure. Really you relieve me, Mr. Wyvern. I had no means of inquiring into the story, of course. But how disgraceful that such a thing should appear in print!'

'I am sorry to say, Mrs. Waltham, that the majority of things which appear in print nowadays are more or less disgraceful. However, this may claim prominence, in its way.'

'And I may safely contradict it? It will be such a happiness to do so.'

'Contradict it by all means, madam. You may cite me as your authority.'

The vicar crushed the sheet into his pocket and strode homewards.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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